



BB



No.

629

Society

OF

55-6
18

INQUIRY ON MISSIONS,

AND

THE STATE OF RELIGION.

LIBRARY
OF THE
Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N.J.

Case,

Div.

Shelf,

Sec.

Book,

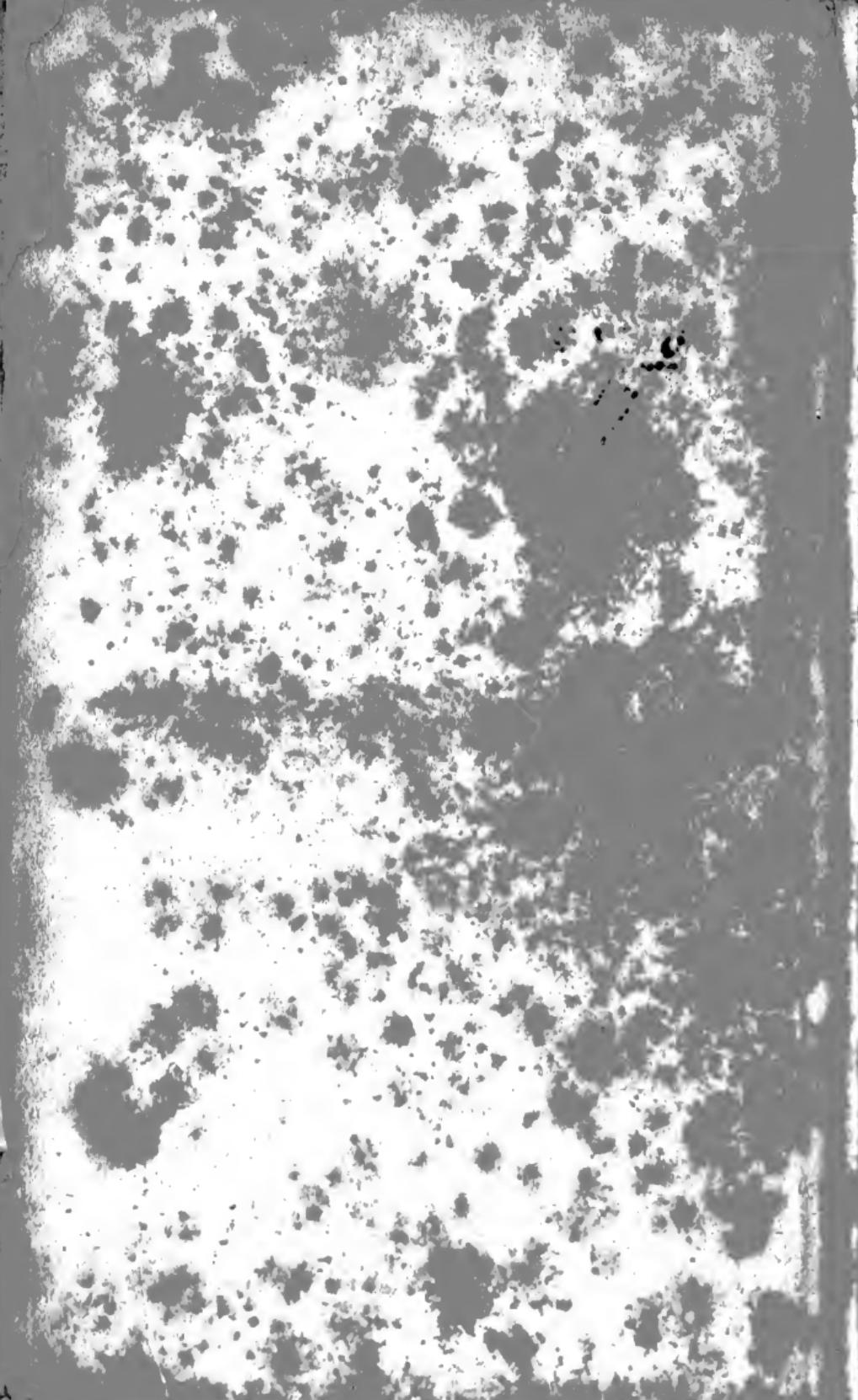
Vol.

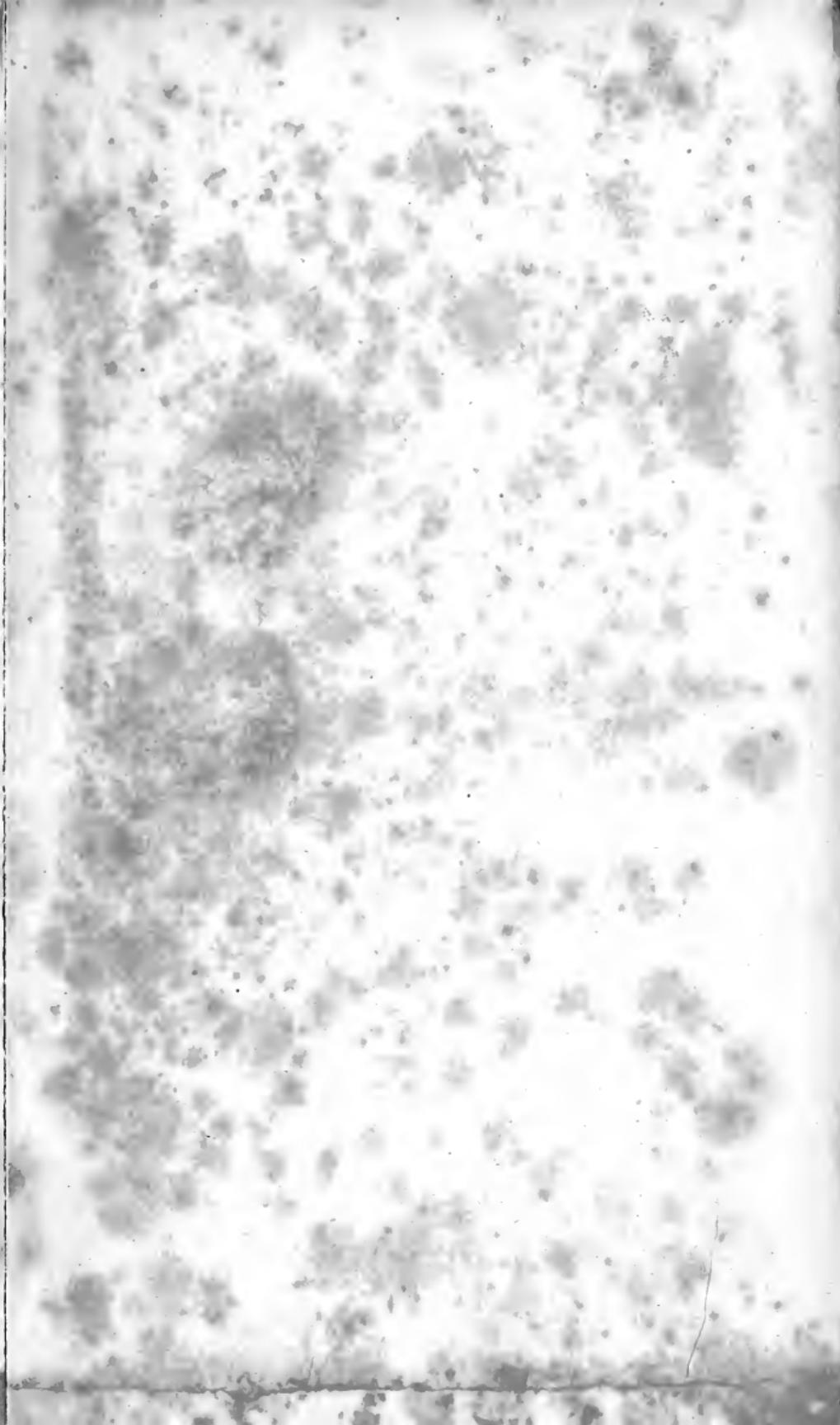
SCB

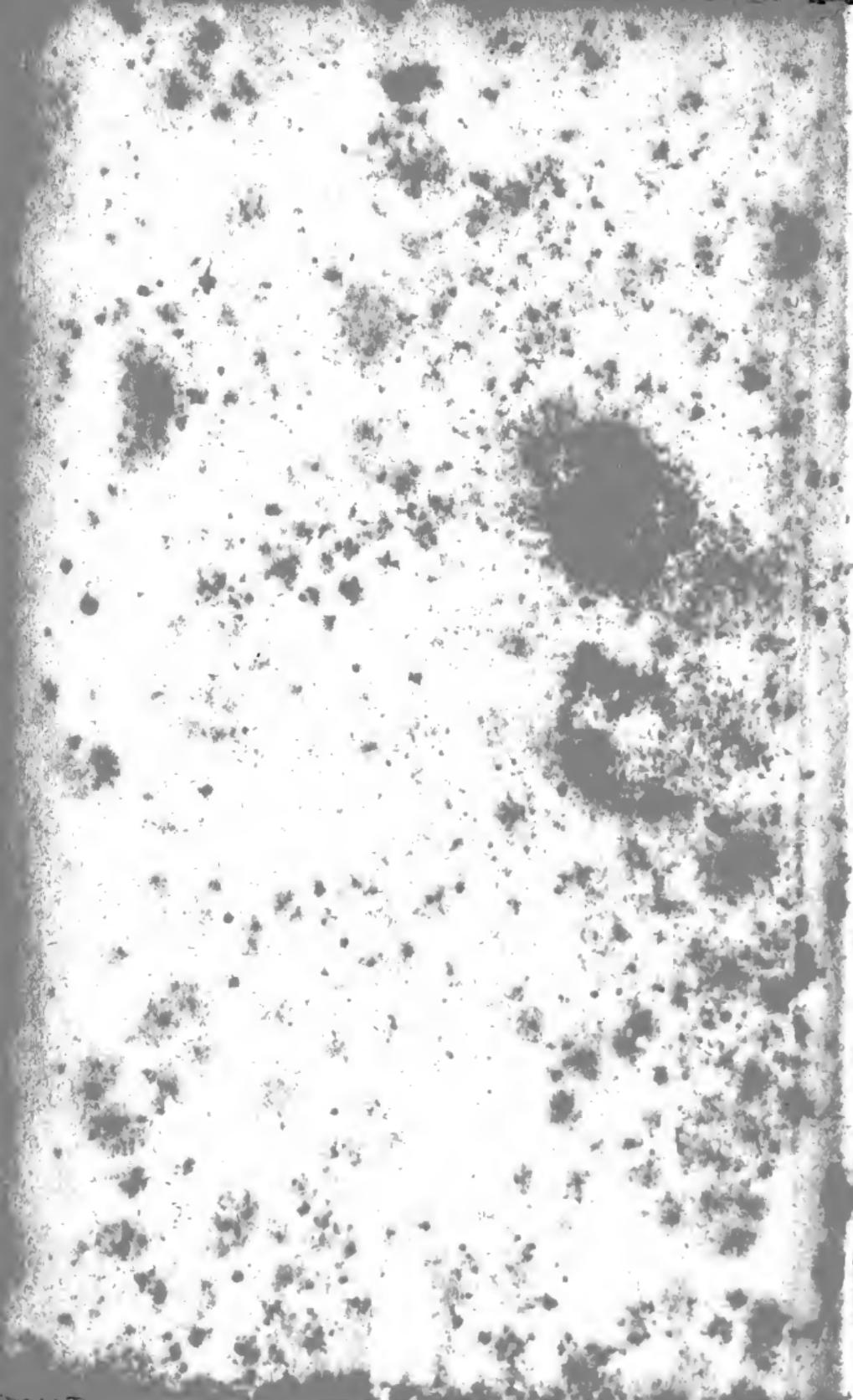
10826

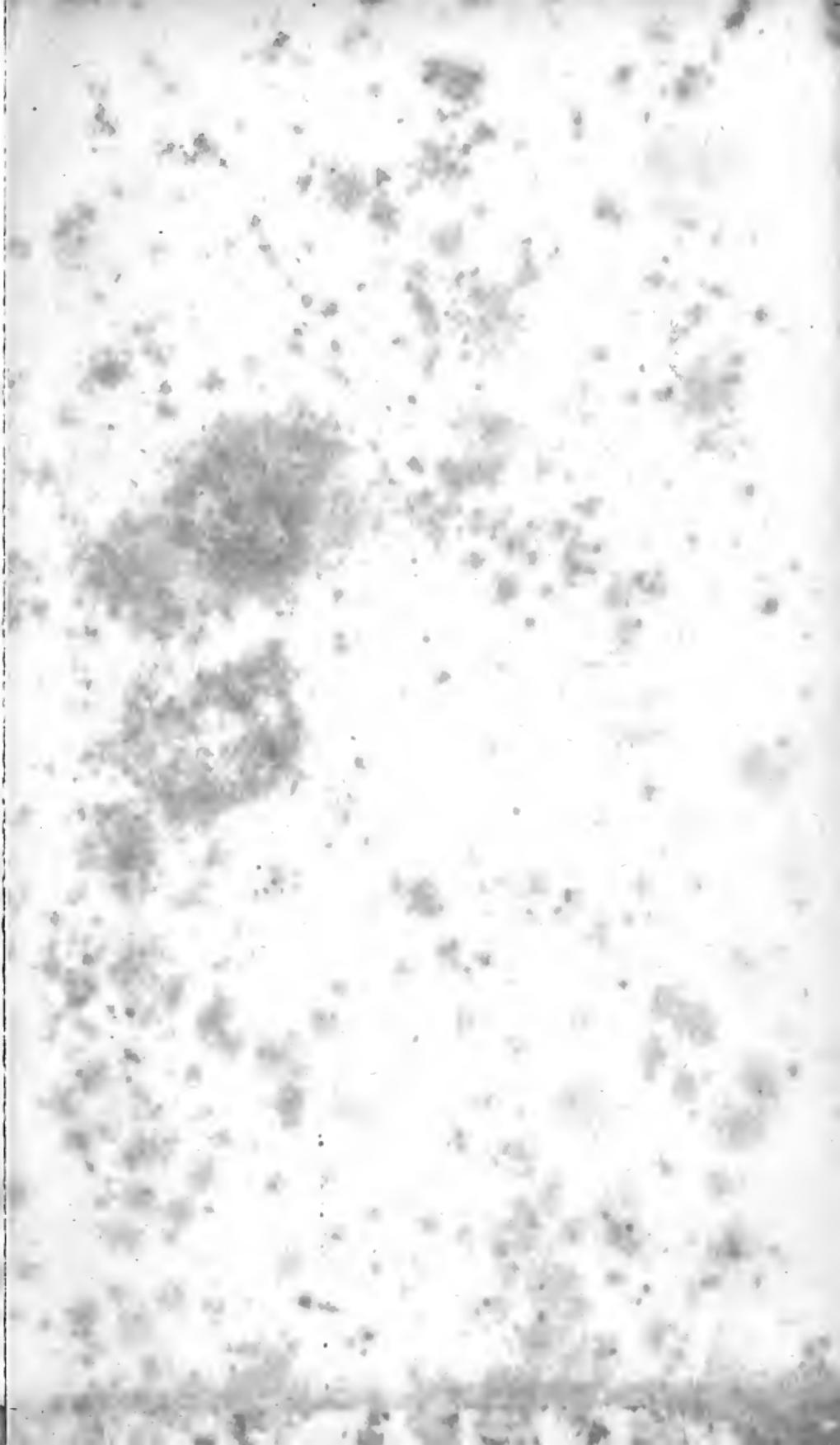
A very nice book











Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

NEW MODEL
OF
CHRISTIAN MISSIONS
TO POPISH, MAHOMETAN,
And Pagan Nations,
EXPLAINED

IN FOUR LETTERS TO A FRIEND,

BY THE AUTHOR OF
Isaac Taylor
“NATURAL HISTORY OF ENTHUSIASM.”

“With one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.”

NEW-YORK;
PUBLISHED BY J. LEAVITT 182 BROADWAY.
CROCKER & BREWSTER, BOSTON,
47 Washington Street.
1830.

Επιτάγμα της Ελληνικής

Δημοκρατίας σε όλη την

Ελλάδα.

Επιτάγμα από την Ελληνική

Δημοκρατία σε όλη την

Επιτάγμα από την Ελληνική

PRINCIPAL
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
NEW MODEL

OF

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS,

&c. &c.

LETTER I.

"AND THERE ARE DIFFERENCES OF ADMINISTRATIONS, BUT
THE SAME LORD."

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We have happily learned in modern times to draw honey from the carcass of the lion. Bigotry lies slain, and even a sweetness recommends its remains. We look on the fair side of schism, or we have imputed to it a fair side, and have forgotten its proper deformity. Few of us perhaps have not long ago ceased to pray heartily or hopefully for its removal from the Church.

We are now looking for a time of refreshment and renovation. But we are aware that renovation must bring with it the re-union of

all sincere Christians, not merely in heart, and hope, and faith, but in actual and visible fellowship? The great principles of such a Church union as must, ere long take place, if a refreshment from above is received, it would not be very difficult to gather from the Scriptures; nor would it require any very extraordinary sagacity to mark out, and to set down in detail the particular reforms, concessions, and forbearances, which must be exacted from the several communities of orthodox Christians in achieving the annihilation of sectarian divisions. Men who, like ourselves, my dear friend, stand rather aside from the centres of party feeling, and who, with a cordial good will towards all who "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," love no one community so fondly as to be blind to its defects, and who, moreover, accustom themselves to contemplate things around them, as if from the vantage ground of a future age, might easily, if it could be of any avail, chalk out, in all its parts, such a plan of a Christian church as should leave not an inch of standing room or shelter for heresy, discord or schism.

But this is not our business; nor is the day come for re-edifying the house of God. The Church, universal at the present moment, pos-

seses neither the power, nor the wisdom, nor the grace necessary to devise, or to carry forwards, movements of so important a kind. We wait the season of heavenly visitation :— in that season those changes, which all calm minds have long seen to be equally indispensable and impracticable, shall, as it were, spontaneously walk forth into existence. Righteousness and Peace—the sisters we have parted, shall suddenly kiss each other.

Meanwhile, no one, if formally appealed to, can consistently call himself a Christian, and not profess to desire the restoration of ecclesiastical harmony. Nor can any one make this profession, and at the same time refuse to give practical proof of his sincerity, when he might do so without hurt to conscience.

If, then, a fair occasion should present itself, on which Christians, of all denominations, might, with safety and facility, and with immense advantage to the one great cause they have at heart, afford an unquestionable exemplification of their dislike of religious divisions, and of their readiness to join hands with their brethren whenever it is possible to do so, it ought to be confidently anticipated

that an opportunity so auspicious will not be lost.

This pleasing anticipation must be greatly strengthened if the proposed measures of co-operation are found to be recommended by special reasons of utility :—if, for example, it were proved, beyond doubt, that our long-cherished hope of converting the world to the faith of Christ is involved in the plan of Catholic combination ;—then, and in such a case, those must indeed be strongly fortified within their little munitions of party preference, who should hold out against the summons both of charity and reason. An occasion of this sort, I boldly affirm to present itself now before the Christian world. The great work of propagating the gospel *admits* the co-operation of all true Christians ; and not only admits, but absolutely demands their *undivided* exertions.

In these letters I propose, with as much brevity as possible, to establish and explain the double proposition here advanced.

But, first, I must claim your attention to the very important distinction between what may, for the moment, be impracticable, and what is in itself chimerical :—the latter term belongs only to ideas that have no affinity with truth

and nature, and which no change of circumstances can recommend to reasonable men; but it may often happen that what is simply impracticable to-day, may be so widely at variance with the existing state of things, that the crowd of mankind will greet it with an outcry of scorn as if it were absurd. In such cases, appeal must be had to the few whose minds are conversant with great principles; but if enough of such persons cannot be found to form a party in favor of the new proposition, then forsooth the cause must stand over to be adjudged by the better sense of a future age. I would, however, refrain, on the present occasion, from a style which may have the semblance of arrogance. The style of crimination, I shall not be in danger of falling into;—for the faultiness of our present system of Missionary exertions has resulted inevitably from the previous condition of the Christian Church; and it implies no blame on the part of individuals; or none but such as is shared in minute fractions by all, whose misfortune it has been to live in times of division.

It would be strange indeed if, in the complicated machinery of our Missionary Societies, there were no errors of management;

but though these were much greater than probably they are, it would be a work of very questionable utility to spread them open to the gaze of malignity and irreligion. At least it may be said that the man who should freely assume the office of censor in this case would be liable to a just suspicion of secret disaffection to the great cause of evangelization. Surely he must possess a super-human magnanimity who, while sensitive to the credit of religion, and glowing with zeal for its diffusion abroad, should take up his post on the side of opposition, and adopt a style of animadversion which might render him liable even to an unfounded accusation of hostile feeling towards the noblest enterprize that the world has ever witnessed !

Happily, in the present instance, I have no such painful duty to discharge ;—and on the contrary can avow a firm persuasion, that there exists among the officers and directors of our several Missionary Societies as large a measure of wisdom, of disinterested zeal, and of primitive simplicity, as could have been brought into the service of Christianity in any age ; and I believe that these excellent qualities are as little alloyed by indiscretion, or by

sinister motives, as is at all compatible with the infirmity of human nature.

Nevertheless it may still be true that the modern system of missionary exertion, taken as a whole, is *fundamentally defective*, and such as can never, unless miracle comes to its aid, achieve an extensive conquest for Christianity. Nothing less than the exalted virtues and admirable temper of the founders and principal supporters of the modern Missionary Societies could have hidden so long from our eyes the capital error on which we have been acting. We have been putting contempt, not only upon the requirements of Christianity, but upon those universal maxims which the experience of mankind has proved to be indispensable to success wherever human agency is concerned. Our error is so great, and the good sense of the age so efficacious,—when once set in movement, that reform cannot be distant.—The elements of Christain zeal must presently be dissolved, and recomposed upon a new model.

As a preliminary to the ensuing argument, it is necessary to lay down the principles that must prompt and guide every reasonable attempt to propagate the Gospel.

We are all agreed in the belief that our religion is destined to pervade the earth, and that the time shall come when every tribe of the human family shall bow at the sacred name of Him whom we worship as Lord and Saviour. To believe less than this seems scarcely compatible with a profession of faith in the truth of the Scriptures ; for, how dark soever may be the language of prophecy in relation to the times and the causes of the event, the ultimate fact is declared in terms too absolute to admit of any other interpretation than one.

But uniformity of opinion ends with the belief of this glorious fact ; for as there is room for many suppositions in regard to the manner in which the conversion of the heathen world shall be effected, so, theories of all kinds have actually been espoused. They may, however, all be classed under two general heads : on the one side it is supposed, and certainly sober reason approves the supposition, that a gradual extension of the existing means of evangelization, more and more copiously blessed from above, will at length, according to what may be termed a natural process, cause the Gospel to triumph universally. On this

theory it is reasonable to believe that when once a certain point of success has been attained, the mere accumulation of power and influence on the side of truth, will impart an irresistible momentum and a greatly accelerated velocity to religious principles, so that the last conquest of Christianity shall be accomplished in an incomparably shorter period than has been occupied in achieving its first successes.

On the other hand, reasons of considerable force may be urged in favour of the opinion that although the common means of religious instruction may have a subordinate part assigned to them in the great movements that are to change the moral aspect of the world, yet, that the glorious revolution shall be effected chiefly by the operation of new and extraordinary means, suddenly coming into play, and perhaps of a supernatural kind. If we entertain this idea, we must suppose, that the part left to the Church will be little more than that of joyous praise and admiration, while it exclaims—"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

The one of these suppositions, or the other, may be entertained with perfect safety, by those who are alive to their duty as Christians,

and whose mode of thinking is free from confusion. The first supposition, though it may cheer the path of labour, cannot materially enhance the obligation of sending the Gospel abroad; nor can the second have any influence whatever, in a sound mind, to relax the energy of Christian zeal. So long as the established economy of the moral world continues what it is, the holder of the one opinion and the holder of the other, must pursue precisely the same course ;—they must put their hands precisely to the same instruments; look for their warrant to the same sanctions ; depend upon the same aid ; and calculate the issue on the very same principles of common sense and scriptural injunction.

This sameness of conduct incumbent upon all Christians, irrespectively of the interpretations they may give to the language of prophecy, results from the breadth and the simplicity of the principle which makes it our duty to diffuse our religion. The most common style of natural benevolence, the most secular sort of philanthropy, the lowest notion of Christian morality, not less than the most pure and elevated impulses of genuine faith and love, all concur in demanding from us the same ardu-

ous course. Mere remoteness of place, or circumstances of hazard and difficulty, cannot be held essentially to distinguish the duty of a parent or master to instruct his children and servants, from that which binds us to impart Christianity to the islanders of the Southern Pacific, or to the Nomadic tribes of central Asia. Or at most the difficulty of the attempt in the latter case, is only to be heard in excuse of inaction after a fair experiment has proved it to be insurmountable.

The first law of Christian morality—to love our neighbour as ourselves—to do unto others as we would they should do unto us—to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, furnishes an incontrovertible warrant for the Missionary enterprise, even apart from the injunction left by our Lord with his disciples, to “go and teach all nations.”

These intelligible principles ask for no exposition ; they admit of no eloquence of enforcement. Whoever does not perceive and feel the practical inference involved in them, must be deemed to stand beyond the range of persuasion—he lives to himself—he is cut off from the family of man ; and whoever, on the plea of hypothetical anticipations, sneaks away

from the post of Christian duty, must be regarded as possessed of no common sense, or no human sympathies. Even if it could be shown on the strongest grounds of probability that we may expect a divine interposition to-morrow, such as should supersede our labours; still it remains certain, that to-day the work of preaching the Gospel is the duty of all who call themselves the disciples of Christ.

This duty is of so very clear and absolute a kind, and it rests on so broad and firm a basis, that if the Missionary enterprise were once fairly brought out from among the narrows of sectarianism, it might be expected to interest the feelings, and to command the support of a large class of persons, who, though not alive to the highest motives, are found to be not slow in obeying the calls of common humanity, and who, if certain facts were distinctly placed before them, would probably rejoice to aid in dispelling the cruelties and impurities of idolatrous worship.

But the obligation we are under, of attempting to convert our erring brethren to the faith of Christ, is not more clear than is the principle under the guidance of which we are to proceed in discharging the part assigned to us

Christian teachers wield no supernatural arms ; they are simply—*teachers* : the utmost they can do is to instruct and to persuade ; and in the accomplishment of their task, they are bound to avail themselves of all those methods of influence which experience authenticates, and which Christianity does not condemn. It is true that the conversion of men is a divine work ; but it is not the less the work of human zeal, industry, and discretion ; and we are just as fully bound to use our utmost sagacity in the discharge of our part, as to discharge it at all.

It is certainly very proper to keep in view the abstract idea of preaching the Gospel, and to think of it simply as an announcement of pardon to those who, like ourselves, are guilty and condemned, and yet are heirs of immortality. In this general view the sons of Adam, of every tribe, stand, without distinction, on the same ground ; and in this view nothing more seems to be included in the idea of a Mission to the heathen, than the sending forth of men who, having themselves become partakers of the grace of God, glow with holy zeal and love towards their brethren, and are willing to make the last sacrifice in attempting to

win them to the hope of immortality. Doubtless the whole essence of Missionary labour is comprised in this abstract_z idea ; nor can it be imagined that any who go forth in this spirit shall be suffered to spend their strength altogether for nought, even though the measures they pursue are so little adapted to the specific character of the work before them, that miracle only could give them extensive success.

But this elementary notion of evangelical labour assuredly does not include all that ought to occupy the attention of those who engage in the work of propagating Christianity among the heathen. If there are any who, from a jealous fear of the introduction of a secular spirit, would affirm that nothing ought to belong to a Christian Mission but the bare announcement of salvation, such persons might instantly be convicted of a practical inconsistency ; for which of them is there that would not strive, in conveying religious instruction, to adapt both his language and his argument to the capacity and disposition of those to whom he speaks ? Who would be so absurd as to exhort a child and an adult, a peasant and a scholar, to repentance and faith, precisely in

the same terms? None, in fact, would carry their theoretical contempt of human wisdom to this point of extravagance. Common sense—not soon put quite to silence, leads even the most determined dogmatists to conform themselves, as nearly as they can, to the intellectual condition—to the ignorance, or to the known prejudices of those to whom they announce the Gospel.

But this adaptation of the style to the hearer contains, by implication, an apology for the use of all those subsidiary means which I have to plead for as essential to the completeness of a Christian Mission to the heathen. If the actual condition of the people we are attempting to convert is known—and it ought always to be known—before we make the attempt, then a Mission to that people must include a *peculiarity of means*, that must make the outfit utterly inappropriate to any other destination.

Can any one blame this adaptation of means to special ends, who himself uses persuasion at all? for in doing so he plainly recognizes the principle, that a part is assigned to the skill and intelligence of the agent in the divine economy of salvation. Having gone

so far, he can with no reason stop short in half measures, or after himself using discretion and skill in the business of Christian instruction, find fault with those who employ *any means*, how elaborate or circuitous soever they may seem, which appear to have a tendency to facilitate the entrance or progress of religion. In a word, if Christians feel themselves bound, by the most solemn obligation, to preach the Gospel wherever they can gain a hearing, they are also bound, by the very same responsibility, to bring into the service, not only their zeal and piety, but all the sagacity, and skill, and knowledge they possess, or may acquire. To condemn any probable means of accomplishing their great object, is in fact to spurn the sanctions under which they act. If, for example, a plan were proposed, which should recommend itself by its obvious reasonableness, Christians would have no more liberty to reject it, than they have to withdraw altogether from the Missionary enterprise. The duty of preaching the Gospel contains the duty of doing so in the best manner we are able.

If the work of evangelizing the nations were held to consist simply in finding men of devo-

ted piety, in fitting them out, and shipping them away to distant shores, as the winds of heaven may determine ;—if the Missionary work be nothing more than the casting the good seed at random over the earth, then indeed we must grant that counsel, and concert, and knowledge, and special qualification, can add little or nothing to the hope of success ; and then, those who are the least esteemed in the church for wisdom, or at least distinguished by acquirements, may, as well as the most accomplished, assume the reins of management.

A few years ago, this inartificial notion of Missions might perhaps have found a multitude of advocates among the pious. But the rebukes of experience have now rendered it almost obsolete. All intelligent and well-informed persons have become thoroughly convinced that, so long as our Missionaries go not forth armed with miraculous powers, they must encounter difficulties which can be surmounted only by special qualities of mind, in addition to piety, courage, and devotedness. It is ascertained, also, that the necessary qualifications of a Missionary are, in part, the gifts of nature to here and there an individual, and

in part must be the result of a long and laborious training.

Then, as to the business of direction at home, if it requires in those who undertake it less of personal courage and self-denial, it asks for more of those high qualities of the mind, which fit men for counsel and government. I know well there is a tendency in religionists, when speaking on subjects of this sort, to give way to preposterous exaggerations, and to make things that are truly important appear ridiculous by the comparisons they use. I would carefully avoid this fault, and yet am ready to hazard the assertion, that the management of a universal Missionary Society, conducted on large and rational principles, would tax the faculties of the human mind to the full as heavily as do the affairs of an empire. Or if you demur at such an assertion, you certainly will not deny that the home management of our warfare against idolatry and Mahometanism may well occupy all the talents that *the religious world* has at its command ;—that the whole of its resources of wisdom, learning, and practical ability, will always be inadequate to the work to be performed ; and, in a word, that we are far

from being in condition to dispense with the most exact economy in the use of these resources. If loss and waste of labour takes place at the centre of movement, by the fault of an ill-contrived machinery, our apparatus ought instantly to be taken to pieces, and reconstructed on a better model.

Silver and gold, scarce as they may be in the chests of charity, abound more than those mental and moral qualities which the Missionary work stands in need of; and if frugality extends no further than to the husbanding of finances, it forgets its chief duty. There is incomparably more need of rational parsimony in the expenditure of the time and talents available to the purposes of the great cause, than of a mere sparing of the funds of our societies, though these indeed admit of no prodigality.

But how should there not take place an immense waste of the most precious of our resources, as well as of the most common, if, in conducting an enterprise so various, so complicated, and so difficult, there is neither unity of counsels, nor a partition of tasks—if all are attempting something in all kinds—if, on some points there is a lavishing of efforts, on some

a collision, and on many a lack of service? The aid of miracle must certainly be reckoned upon by those who imagine that the work of propagating Christianity abroad may proceed auspiciously while prosecuted on a system directly opposed to those universal laws which are found to be indispensable to the success of all human undertakings.

It is now perfectly well understood that unity of plan, and division of labor, are the two great secrets of prosperity. From the affairs of a counting-house to those of a kingdom, and in mechanical processes of all kinds, if the whole mass of labour be not subjected to the same counsels, or if it be not distributed among the several co-operators on the principle of giving to each the particular task which by natural ability or acquired habit he is qualified to perform, nothing is to be expected but confusion, defeat, and waste of means. It is the perfection with which, in modern times, the principle of the division of labour has been carried into effect, that has set the European nations generally, and the English in particular, so immensely in advance of the most polished people of antiquity, in all the useful arts, and in the executive processes of government. DIVISION OF LABOUR has

seemed to vanquish impossibilities, and to impart a sort of omnipotence to human industry.

Walk round the circle of mechanic arts as they are carried on in England at the present moment ; visit manufactories, warehouses, trading establishments, or public offices, and you will see on every side, and under a thousand forms, the same law working its way through difficulty and perplexity, with the ease of unconscious power, or with the celerity of enchantment. In the management of the revenues of state, or in the making of a pin, the very same engine,—the division of Labour, is brought to bear upon the process. Or if here and there, from the stubbornness of inveterate custom, or the want of intelligence, or the impliability of subalterns, the obsolete and clumsy modes of labour are persisted in, there you will also see Ruin resting her heavy hand upon the work; or, at the best, such small successes as may be obtained, are purchased at a cost of exertion which if better applied, would have secured ten times the product.

And now tell me, my dear friend, on what plea it is, that you would exclude from the management of Christian Missions, the unal-

terable law of successful achievement? Will you say that this great work is to form an exception because it belongs only in part to human agency?—In behalf of *that* part, I demand free entrance for the principle of division of labour. Human agency, be its range more or less limited, must submit itself to its proper conditions, and can never, without impious presumption, aspire to a conformity with the methods of divine proceeding. On the present occasion we are not talking of miracles, or of wonders; but of things that come under the hand of man—of things which his skill may further, or his folly spoil. And we are not only speaking of a work that belongs to the sphere of human agency; but of one that is eminently difficult, operose, various in its circumstances; a work which peculiarly demands the application of *specific qualifications to specific objects*. No enterprise of commerce or of politics, nearly so much as the management of a Christian Mission to the unchristian world, demands that such and such individuals—rarely furnished by natural ability and laborious acquirements, should devote their undiverted attention, through life, *to the same spheres of action*.

With how perilous a presumption are we then chargeable, if, in contempt of the well-known principles of labour, we cast this mighty enterprise upon the billows of confusion, and leave it to the winds and waves of accident, to supply the place of the wisdom we will not exercise.

But I ought not, my dear friend, to do you the injustice of supposing that you will undertake to defend the grand fault of the existing system, or that you would oppose yourself to reform on any other ground than that of the impossibility of realizing a better model. Assuming then that your assent is so far gained, there are two questions to be determined;—first, in what manner the common laws of labour might be applied to the work of propagating Christianity; and secondly, how those obstacles are to be surmounted which seem to render the proposed reform impracticable.

For the first question then.—In the management of complicated affairs, unity of counsels is necessary, *chiefly* because, without it, full advantage cannot be taken of the method of the division of labour; for this method requires, that the whole work should be ana-

lyzed with philosophical precision, and that, in the actual apportionment of tasks, no motives whatever should be listened to, but such as are warranted by the severest reason. But of course nothing like this can take place, if the opinions and caprices of unconnected individuals rule the conduct of affairs. It is true, that, in the execution of extensive mercantile enterprises, a greater advantage may arise to the public from leaving the eagerness of individuals to discover, as it were by instinct the channels of prosperous adventure, than can be secured by the ponderous and powerful machinery of great chartered companies. But in matters of gain the motives of exertion have a vigour, a versatility, and a certainty, which almost supersede the necessity of combined counsels; or even if partial errors arise, they bring with them a quick chastisement, which presently amends the fault. Besides, the advantages belonging to a large trading company, are counter-balanced by the oppressions that belong to monopoly.

An illustration more nearly allied to the subject before us may be taken from the affairs of government. The Christian community, meditating the subjugation of the

nations to its own faith, may be compared to a kingdom engaging in a war of universal conquest, but having at its command very limited resources. In such a case success must depend, not merely on the courage and spirit of the people, and on the military talent of commanders; but quite as much on a perfect system of management at the centre of movement. Neither life or treasure must be wasted upon ill-concerted attempts: there must be no excess of force applied to particular points; and especially the whole strength of the state must always be held in readiness to move towards any point where either extraordinary danger, or hope, may present itself. If, instead of such a perfect husbanding of means, the war of universal conquest were left to the skill and courage of a dozen independent chiefs, who, if not hostile to each other, acknowledge no subordination;—if each selects for himself his field of enterprise, and devises for himself his mode of attack, it is absolutely certain that, in such a case, neither the valour of the people, nor the talent of their leaders, could avail to achieve any extensive or permanent success. Splendid triumphs might here and there be won, and unfading

laurels acquired ; but the world would not be vanquished.

The analogy is close enough to justify the inference I would derive from it.—The holy war of extermination which Christians are carrying on against the idols of the nations, is one of too great extent and difficulty not absolutely to demand a perfect combination of efforts. This combination is asked for, as we shall presently see, by powerful motives of a moral and religious kind ; but it is chiefly necessary for the purpose of giving effect to the principle of Division of Labour. This desirable object might be fully attained, as I shall show, by the simplest plan of concurrence, and without having recourse to any of that ponderous machinery, or pomp, and state, and magnitude of movement, which might offer temptation to ambitious minds, or seem incompatible with the simplicity and humility of the Christian temper.

I assume then the supposition that, for the purpose of bringing fully to bear upon the Missionary cause, the great principle of a perfect division of labour, the entire body of evangelical Christians in the British islands—not denying that the plan of co-operation

might embrace the foreign protestant Churches—are not merely all animated by a zeal of the same quality, but actually willing to throw together their resources—moral, mental, and financial, into one and the same coffer ;—a supposition manifestly accordant with the spirit of the Gospel, as well as with the dictates of common sense.

We imagine then a universal, or rather a harmonious association to be formed for the purpose of propagating Christianity abroad. It is then to be inquired in what manner it shall distribute among its members and agents the multifarious labours which lie before it.

Wherever division and sub-division is to take place, very much depends upon choosing aright the *major* and the *minor* in our classification. Thus, for example, it might seem a simple and obvious mode of apportioning the toils of a great Missionary Society, to assign to separate committees the several departments of—financial management—the education of Missionaries—the government of the foreign stations—negotiation with our own or foreign governments, &c. But advantages of a higher kind seem to recommend the plan of making these different branches of

management the subject of a *sub-division*; while the dissimilarity of the several spheres of Missionary labour is taken as the basis of the primary partition. On this principle there would be formed a number of societies separate and distinct, yet always in correspondence with each other, and actually connected by their relationship to a common centre of counsel. Each would occupy its peculiar field, and each distribute within itself the different functions of finance—theological superintendence—foreign management, &c.

The obvious fact that the condition of Pagan, Mahometan, and professedly Christian nations, is so various as to demand a specific order of means in each instance, affords ground enough for adopting such an arrangement as the one above-mentioned. It is also an obvious fact that there are to be found at the service of the Church, *specific qualifications*, natural and acquired, fitting certain individuals for moving with advantage in particular spheres of labour, rather than in others. There are, for example, to be found actually in the service of the Missionary cause men who, from the opportunity they have had of acquiring local knowledge, or from the nature

of their studies, or from the peculiarity of their tastes, are sure to be consulted or employed when particular measures are in agitation. And if the principle of adapting our evangelical enterprises with precision to the condition of the people we aim to convert, were more fully acted upon than it is, such qualified individuals would be called upon to act the prominent part which belongs to them in the management of our Missions ; and yet they might, with advantage to the cause, share the labours of direction with those well-meaning individuals, whose zeal, rather than any other quality, places them in the front of the work.

I am extremely anxious, my dear friend, to abstain from whatever might seem invidious ; but I must now request you to compare, for a moment, the present system, over which anarchy and confusion preside, and in which a number of independent and unconnected bodies are feebly attempting something in all kinds, with the proposed apportionment of peculiar tasks to separate associations, each of which would be managed by two or three individuals, specifically qualified to discharge the part assigned to them. I ask which of

the two plans it is that is recommended by common sense, and the eternal laws of the human mind, and which it is that asks for a large apology on the ground of the inevitable imperfection of all human affairs? But let me, for the sake of giving more complete illustration to the principle I advocate, descend, for a moment, to the details of the proposed arrangement. We imagine then the entire resources of Christian beneficence to be decomposed, and recast in the form of seven societies.—

Of these, the first would devote itself to the task of supplanting the Romish superstition by scriptural religion, in those countries that still profess Popery. Perhaps the chief and most promising sphere of its operations would be found among the Independent States of South America. The unhappy Ireland would, of course, employ its cares, and it would lose no opportunity for introducing the light of truth in the Catholic countries of the European Continent. May it be said that the predominance of *the elementary idea* of a Christian Mission, as consisting merely in the sending forth of preachers, has, along with other causes, operated to prevent the employ-

ment of many subsidiary means which might be had recourse to where the establishment of a Mission, in the primary sense of the term, is impracticable? Otherwise, why is it that so little has hitherto been attempted in behalf of Popish countries? Such attempts cannot be deemed unnecessary; for our principles as Protestants oblige us to regard all as unchristian, who in fact do not possess the Scriptures. And whether the mass of the people are absolutely ignorant of the existence of the Inspired Volume, or are suffered by their priests to know nothing more of it than the mere name, is a matter of no consequence to their spiritual state; for public rites, whatever names may occur in prayers and anthems, have never been found to possess efficacy for conveying genuine religious sentiments. It is therefore no breach of charity to presume that those are not Christians who have not the Bible in their hands; and if not Christians, then they are the proper objects of Missionary zeal. The only question is by what means we should attempt, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, to introduce scriptural religion among them? It is obvious that, in dealing with the populace,

the assailable point of the Romish religion is its withholding the Bible from the laity. This then is the side on which we commence our attack. And here, contrary to the usual course of things, when the promotion of truth is our object, we have the natural impulses of the human mind in our favour. No man, we may be assured, is ever heartily pleased with the attempts of another to keep him in the dark ; and if we would understand the extreme difficulty which the Romish priesthood have ever found in maintaining entire the thick curtain of ignorance which they spread over their victims, we have only to observe the irritation—an irritation too great to be concealed, which they feel whenever attempts are made to light the candle of knowledge within the pale of their church. Our course is then open before us. It may fairly be presumed that the formation of a society in England, candidly confessing its object to be the circulation of the Scriptures in Roman Catholic countries, would have a quickening influence upon the popular mind, especially where there already exists a resentful consciousness of the spiritual tyranny which has so long locked up the Book of

God. Nor can it be doubted that the persevering efforts of a body of *competent persons*, having at their command a moderate revenue, would, in a few years, in spite of prohibitions, render the Bible by no means a scarce book in countries where at present it is held only by stealth. The issue need not be questioned : as the crying sin of the Church of Rome is the suppression of the Scriptures, so, from their diffusion, will it meet its overthrow.

The proposed Society, freed from the scruples which must *confine* it to the Scriptures, would employ itself in issuing—not feeble, fliprant, or irritating tracts, but powerful treatises, of course condensed within a small compass, on the principal questions at issue between Protestants and Papists : or rather on the cardinal points of Christianity, as derivable from the Scriptures, and with little or no reference to controversy. Such a society would especially take care to provide and to distribute historical treatises, popular in their style, and yet substantially learned, in which the rise of the Romish usurpation, and the origin of its many corruptions, would be distinctly set forth ; every statement being supported by reference to proper authorities. La-

bours like these, and others which of course would suggest themselves to well informed and intelligent men, would well occupy the undiverted attention of the few individuals whom the public voice would call to the difficult task. To imagine that a chance committee of some dozen or score of good sort of men, taken where they may be found, but possessing no specific qualifications for the duties they are to perform, and a committee, moreover, distracted among a hundred dissimilar objects, can efficiently discharge the functions of such a society as I have described, is indeed to affront common sense in a manner that baffles reasonable expostulation.

A second society would assume to itself the vast and arduous labour of recommending the Christian faith to Mahometan nations. Its sphere, alas ! would embrace the largest and the fairest portions of the earth.—The greater part of Asia, and of Africa, and a part of Europe, are darkened by this delusion !—Immense and worthy enterprise ! and though difficult, yet, at the present moment, in a high degree hopeful ! But even the hopefulness of the enterprise imparts to it a character of

awful responsibility. Who among us, at this crisis of Islamism, shall obey the call of the Christian Church, and appear as the champions of the cross to contend against the mighty! We have not here to engage on the field of reason and moral suasion, merely with untutored nomades, or with unsophisticated islanders, ignorant of every thing but of their paddles and their fruits. We have to do with men as acute, if not as well taught as ourselves; with men haughty by all the recollections which remote history can impart; with men who, looking only at the extrinsic qualities of human nature, and the obvious advantages of person, climate, and produce, may easily persuade themselves that their contempt of the western nations is not absurd. We have to instruct and to persuade the intellectual, imaginative, and astute Persian; the arrogant, obdurate, fanatical, and yet noble-minded Turk. Nor do our difficulties diminish if we descend among the sub-civilized adherents of the Prophet, scattered throughout India, the islands of the Eastern Sea, through Egypt, and northern Africa.

For the style in which the Mahometan should be encountered, an example, never to

be lost sight of, has been set by Henry Martyn: and though, "of course, companies of such men are not to be found; yet whoever is sent forth to labour in this field, should possess qualifications of the same class.— Nor can kindred qualities be dispensed with in those who at home are to direct the work. In conducting a Mission to Mahometan nations, is it enough that men should be zealous, prayerful, kind-hearted? Is it enough that they should be expert in managing those details of business which are common to a Missionary Society with every other charitable institution? Or is it enough that they should be competent to read sound theological lectures to candidates for the work, or that, in sending out their Missionaries, they should be able to address to them powerful and pathetic harangues? Is it, in a word, enough, that they should be just qualified to do that which should be done if we had only to send out a company of preachers to officiate in the chapels of an English colony? All this is not enough. The projectors and managers of such an attack upon Mahometanism as the present moment invites, should be the *four or five individuals* who might be

picked out from the fourteen millions of our population. And these four or five gifted men should be solemnly called forth by the voice of the Christian public, and should be placed in a condition in which they might freely devote the undistracted attention of their remaining years to the great work. And let the agency of these individuals be as much blended as you please with influence of a more popular kind; and let public opinion bear with its whole force upon whatever they do. We want no snug or sleeping secrecy; but we absolutely need qualified and permanent agents for the achievement of difficult tasks.

Beside the direct method of sending Christian teachers where they may be admitted in Mahometan countries, and of circulating the Scriptures, the peculiar state of the nations professing Islamism invites the adoption of other measures of a more general kind.—Under the direction of a sub-committee, it might, for instance, be attempted to lay before the more advanced of the Mahometan nations, the bait of European philosophy, science, and art; and we might even tempt them to move forward on the course of im-

provement by explaining the principles, and exhibiting the advantages of our social economy and political institutions. By these means, without obtruding invidious comparisons, we might generate among them that salutary sense of inferiority which is the primary element of improvement. This feeling would relax the cords of national and religious bigotry, would rob the Asiatic of his absurd superciliousness, and give him in the place of it, the manly desire to deal with Europeans on terms of real equality.

A society, constituted as I have imagined, might carry on literary correspondence with intelligent orientals, and might invite the visits of such persons to our country, and especially might induce the sending of young men to our universities, for the benefit of English education. It would of course also be attempted to furnish the educated classes in Mahometan countries with a veritable and exact knowledge of modern history—secular and sacred. No subsidiary means, perhaps, would better tend to dissipate the illusion which beguiles the followers of the Prophet. In executing this task, the safe path of *perfect candour* should be adhered to, and the history

of Christianity—unglozed, and unveiled, should be held forth, and it should manifestly appear that the force of truth is confided in by those who make these disclosures.

The pious need not be alarmed lest, in pursuing measures of this kind, we should too much secularize the business of a Christian Mission. They who are wise well know how to bestow separate attention upon dissimilar means, while pursuing a great and ultimate object. Besides our Missionary Societies already busy themselves, and very properly in the establishment of manufactories, and in the encouragement of commerce, as the means of humanizing savage tribes. All that we would do then, is to accommodate our subsidiary means to the condition of the people with whom we have to do. We send a loom or a plough to Taheite; but we must treat the Persian in a different manner.

The Society already existing for promoting Christianity among the Jews, may here be mentioned as occupying a third place in our proposed series.

A fourth Missionary Society would under-

take the propagation of the Gospel among the polytheistic nations of southern Asia, and the numerous islands in the Eastern Sea. And you will not deny that enough is included in this sphere of labour to occupy the undistracted attention of all among us who are at once *qualified* and *disposed*, to give their lives to the task. Without affecting to disparage what has already been accomplished in India, it may fairly be affirmed, that at the rate at which the conquests of Christianity are proceeding there, ages must elapse before that strongest hold of abominable idolatry will be vanquished, or those fair regions of the sun purged of their impurities, and brought to offer gifts, "gold, frankincense, and myrrh," to the King of kings. Ere a twentieth portion of the population now subject to our sway, and now looking to us for their destinies, has ever heard of Christianity, the miracle of our power in India may have come to its end, and the remains of the last English army that shall ever unfurl its colours in the East, may have hastened to their ships from its shores. We have then not a year, or a day, to lose in desultory and divided efforts. If we could find motives nowhere else,

we might find more than enough in the extraordinary advantages which, at the present moment, we possess for Christianizing India, to induce us to dissolve the present inefficient and wasteful system of Missionary efforts, and to adopt a better. In truth, it might seem wise, almost, while the resources of Christian philanthropy are so limited, to withdraw our expenditure from every other point, and to concentrate our force upon these nations, now, in so remarkable a manner, committed to our responsibility. The men of other heathen nations are indeed our brethren, and should be cared for ; but the nations of India have come under our roof, and have drawn around our hearth ; and their miseries must instantly be relieved. And shall we be talking of our scruples, and stickling upon obscure questions of church government, and standing stiffly and stupidly within our petty enclosures, while the people of India, in millions—our subjects, our servants, our children, are perishing in the fangs of their dæmon gods ? Shall we “call for water”—the holy water of hypocrisy—wherein to “wash our hands” from the blood of widows, and infants, which is running past us like a

winter torrent ? But you say that this is not our guilt ; or not the guilt of the Christian public in England. We have a zeal for the salvation of the people of India; we spend thousands in her behalf ; our preachers lay down their lives in her service. This is true, and doubtless our labours come up as a memorial for us in the court of Heaven.—But the question returns—whether we are doing the best we might for India ; or whether we are not rather drivelling in our zeal, than acting with the discretion of men ?

The fifth of these evangelical corporations should assume to itself the task of attacking the irreligion of China; and as our attempts in that direction, though attended with peculiar difficulties, are not likely soon to cover an extensive surface, the same society might include within its sphere the nations of northern Asia.

The African race, central, western, and southern; but excluding the Mahometan nations of the northern and eastern coast, and including the enslaved negro of the West Indies, would employ a sixth association ;

while the aborigines of the two Americas, and the islanders of the great Pacific, would fall to the lot of the seventh.

Thus should we have divided among us the great family of man ! Vast apportionment ! and at first appearance perhaps ambitious, or chimerical ; but not so to the eye of experienced benevolence. We know the work is immense ; but we hear distinctly the call of Heaven to engage in it ; we know by actual experiment of what quality the labour is ; we know by proof that success is not impossible ; nay, we know it to be the *probable* issue of well directed and persevering endeavours. Who are the people that are now devising the conquest of the earth to the faith of Christ, but the descendants of barbarians who were converted to the same faith by the same means !

If any one shall talk to us of the extreme difficulty of the enterprise, we shall reply to him, first—that we rely upon the aid and promise of God; and secondly, that we intend to employ *our best discretion*, as well as to use our utmost energy in the business : we set about it therefore piously ; but not presumptuously. We keep distinctly in view the

double principle, equally true and important in both its parts, that the work before us is the work of God; yet not less the work of man.

It is very probable that some other arrangement than the one above described, and which I have particularized only for the sake of exemplifying the general principle, might more advantageously be adopted. Still the great law of the partition of labour would determine the plan, however it might be modified.

I wish most carefully to avoid whatever might seem invidious, or whatever might be misinterpreted as intended to disparage the character and labours of men who are held by the Churches in deserved veneration. It must, however, be permitted to me to contemplate, for a moment, the existing constitution of our Missionary Societies, considered as a whole, and as a scheme of human agency, devised to accomplish a difficult object.

It is perfectly known that, except on peculiar occasions, the actual business of every charitable institution is transacted by a very small number of zealous individuals, who

perhaps are as often thwarted and embarrassed, as aided by their colleagues. Of necessity, therefore, it must be that when a society occupies an extensive and various field of labour, *the few efficient individuals* are compelled, often at the expense of health and peace of mind, to give their distracted attention, in rapid succession, now to the home concerns of the society, and now to its foreign operations; and these foreign operations are of the most dissimilar character. Placed in circumstances so perplexing, what can be expected, even from the most accomplished talent, and the most unwearied assiduity, but a vague, inappropriate, and almost imbecile suffusion of mental strength over the immense surface of affairs. And what can be expected from zeal so disadvantaged, but a waste of resources upon projects which, though they might have succeeded had they enjoyed the benefit of undiverted counsels, could not but fail when they shared attention with a multitude of dissimilar concerns?

And let us turn into another street, and enter another “upper-chamber” of Christian business; and there see another little knot of zealous men, distracting themselves

by an almost fruitless attention to the very same extended circle of multifarious objects. Again we may visit another, and yet another committee—not each concentrating its forces upon a single specific object—not each constituted of individuals personally qualified for the tasks they severally undertake ; but each promiscuously gathered from the narrow circle of a particular party, and each burdened, and over-burdened by the well-meant ambition of effecting something at all points, and something of all kinds. And does this Missionary system approve itself to reason ? or is it not rather a most ruinous chaos, in which, though pure motives may be very conspicuous, manly wisdom is not at all seen ?

The question is not whether the revenues of an empire ought to be grudged as the price of rescuing even a single human soul from perdition ; but whether we are not solemnly bound to do the best possible with our means, limited as they are ? The question before us is whether, in conducting our labours for the benefit of mankind, we shall conform ourselves to those unalterable laws of intellectual and mechanical labour which take their rise from the very nature of the human mind; or

set all such methods at defiance, and, contenting ourselves with the consciousness of the purest intentions, and of the utmost possible diligence, shall cast our efforts upon the winds, hoping that Heaven, in its wisdom, will direct them for good.

You may tell me perhaps, that the well-known advantages of competition belong to the present system of Missionary exertion, and that our several societies act beneficially upon each other—"provoking one another to love, and to good works." I reply, in the first place, that the benefits derivable from *the rivalry of sects* are of a very ambiguous kind; and in the second place, that the stimulus of competition, perfectly freed from the acridness of party-feeling, would belong to the scheme I advocate. Each of the societies above named, constituted promiscuously of men of different communions, would have before it a fair course of emulation, on which by skill and assiduity, to win for itself its proper share of public favour.

In such a system, public support would be distributed much more advantageously than it can at present. Indeed one can hardly imagine a more disadvantageous or wasteful

method of apportioning the whole amount of Missionary contributions than the one actually in operation, which doles out the revenues of Christian liberality, not in any proportion to the nature or extent of the work to be performed at the several points of the great enterprise; but according to the most arbitrary of all possible rules—the opulence or poverty of each sect. Now it may often happen that a less opulent society has taken possession of a field where the largest revenues might with peculiar propriety be expended: while on the contrary another society, which, from the wealth or extent of the party to which it belongs, has at its disposal five times the income, may be spending its means on a large surface to little purpose. It is as if, in managing the finances of an empire, the millions of its revenue were thrown into the wheel of chance, to be drawn thence by the several ministers of state, as luck may determine: thus, while a subordinate department would be glutted with affluence, the most necessary affairs might suffer ruinous deprivation.

You remind me that popular opinion is liable to caprices and errors. This is true; but its caprices are never so great as those of

mere chance. If we include any considerable portion of time, public opinion is found to obey the voice of reason, and to follow the leading of facts. If therefore the Missionary work were, without regard to party, apportioned to several independent societies, each having its peculiar sphere, and each depending, yearly, for the amount of its income upon the claims it could substantiate to public favour, there would take place (particular instances excepted) a highly advantageous flux of Christian liberality towards the points where it would produce the best effects. Or, to borrow a phrase from physiological science, the special occasions of the whole system would be supplied by an instantaneous determination of forces, in this or that direction.

But you say that, on peculiar occasions, something of this sort has actually taken place ; and less opulent societies have successfully appealed to the liberality of the Christian public. But at how great a cost of labour, and anxiety, and deranged movement, have such extraordinary supplies been obtained ! and at the best they have given only temporary aid where permanent support was

in fact as much wanted as instantaneous assistance. Our proposed new system would adapt itself to such occasions both more readily and more efficaciously.

That the work of converting the heathen should, in the first instance, have been attempted by the several sects separately was inevitable, under the then existing circumstances of the church. And that so much has actually been effected amid the disadvantages of a method so faulty and so feeble, affords a striking proof of the intrinsic vigour of Christian motives.—Thus when the people of a country that groans beneath a foreign yoke rise, and without concert, without a leader, and in detached parties, actually make head against the common enemy, they give the most incontestible evidence of the force and genuineness of that spirit of patriotism which moves them: and it may be confidently said, that the energies of such a people want nothing but to be skilfully directed to achieve a perfect triumph. And thus too may it be affirmed, that if the Christian body, torn as it is, has in a few years accomplished so much, the same zeal, wisely economised, would presently win signal successes.

The ordinary course of human affairs leads us to suppose that, in the progress of an enterprise so novel and difficult, some very considerable changes in the construction of its machinery must become necessary.— Nothing that is complicated is well done at first; and if the modern missionary zeal did in fact, at its very outset, reach the maturity of wisdom, we ought indeed to believe that its birth was, in the most proper sense, miraculous. But the intelligent friends of our Missionary Societies will not advance a pretension of this sort; on the contrary, they will readily admit that our endeavours to diffuse the Gospel are, in all respects, liable to the common conditions of human agency; and that, as they are obnoxious to error, so are they open to amendment; and we must expect them to succeed or to be overthrown, not so much according to the purity of the motives by which they are prompted, as in proportion to the discretion with which they are managed. The supporters of missions have devoted to the glory of God and the good of their fellow-creatures, not merely their money, and their time, and the fervour of their hearts, but the best vigour of their

understandings ; and a vigorous understanding is distinguished from a feeble one by the promptitude with which it employs itself in revising its own proceedings, and by its eagerness to do better what it has done amiss.

I affirm then, that unless some difficulty absolutely insurmountable, compels us to submit to the existing system, and to bend patiently under all its immense disadvantages, that system ought instantly to give place to a better. I hope, ere I conclude these letters, to convince you—*first*, that no insuperable obstacle stands in the way of the proposed reform ; and, *secondly*, that the New Model which I have described, besides its being necessary as a means of success, is recommended by moral and religious considerations of a kind that ought of themselves to secure the compliance of every one who confesses obedience to Christ.

LETTER II.

"HAVE YE NOT READ WHAT DAVID DID, AND THEY THAT
WERE WITH HIM ?—"

MY DEAR FRIEMD.

Religion is possessed by the church in every age as a patrimony, handed down from the fathers to the sons ; but it is not an unincumbered patrimony ; and if our Christian ancestors deserve our veneration for having preserved to us the faith—often at the cost of their lives or worldly interests, we are entitled to make some small deduction from the debt of gratitude on account of the serious injury and the many inconveniences we sustain from the discords they have delivered into our keeping, and from the lasting ill consequences of the divisions which their disputes engendered, and which we think ourselves bound to maintain. Even their wisdom and virtue does us a harm, inasmuch as they operate to restrain us from attempting to rid ourselves of

what might be relinquished with vast advantage.

Those who stand somewhat aloof from the centres of party-feeling, and who accustom themselves to contemplate things around them from the vantage ground of what—for want of a better term—we must call the point of philosophical speculation, cannot but perceive that Christians of all denominations are sadly crippled in judgment, and fettered in understanding, by the reluctance felt to renounce an iota of what they have received as their heritage of religious principles from the venerated founders of the sect. Events—more powerful than arguments, must come to the aid of the universal church when the time of emancipation arrives. We have long and fruitlessly listened to all that can be said or written on certain well known themes. Or, even if a new and a cleaner method of treating these subjects were to prevail, and existing errors on all sides were to be demonstrated, the consequent work of reformation would be found to be attended with inextricable difficulties, and perhaps with dangers: nor does it appear that, at the present time, there are any to whom all parties would instinc-

tively look up as qualified for the arduous work of reconstructing the Christian Church on a model of perfect symmetry. We must, then, wait the appointed season of renovation ;—Time, the great innovator, must also discharge the function of reformer.

Meanwhile, all right-minded men, well aware as they are of the imperfections that attach to the present condition of Christianity, and earnestly looking forward to a brighter era, take care on all occasions, and to the utmost extent which consistency permits, to lean to the side of a true Catholicism ; and both in spirit and in practice, step, as far as they may, over lines of demarcation, and seize, by anticipation, the blessings and advantages of that better state of things which they hope for. Those auspicious inconsistencies into which the spirit of charity continually leads good men, of all parties, have especially abounded on the field of Missionary labour; for while each party thinks itself obliged, in conscience, to despatch shipments of its peculiarities to the ends of the earth, and to take all the care it can that Hindoos, Hottentots, and savage islanders, shall worship after the right manner ; yet, at the very same time,

each, with unquestionable cordiality and joy, hails the successes of the others, and with prompt sympathy lends aid on peculiar occasions.

At the present moment there exists, among the supporters of Missions, almost as perfect a union of heart as can be wished for.—Nothing of disunion remains among us but its immense practical disadvantage, and its opprobrium in the eye of the world. If at this time it might be suspected that a concealed sentiment of hostility towards each other lurks in the hearts of Christians—if there were reason to think that they are not only divided, but inimical, in that case, the idea of effecting a combination must be deemed chimerical. But the reverse is the fact: the forms of warfare only are kept up, while the spirit of aggression has long since fled. Yet it is supposed, that though dissociation be a great evil, it can in no way be avoided. The contrary, I think, may be demonstrated. The real difficulty *has already been overpassed by us*, and nothing but an *imaginary obstacle* stands in the way of the undisturbed co-operation of all parties in the Missionary cause. I hope to make good this assertion.

If the opinion of Christians on the subject of Missions may be fairly inferred from their practice, it might be expressed in some such terms as the following:—"We do, indeed, think ourselves obliged to send to heathen nations our particular shade of doctrine, and our model of discipline and worship, which we believe to be, of all others, the one most nearly conformed to the canon of truth. Nevertheless, far from supposing these peculiarities to be essential to Christianity, or from deeming it unlawful to aid the propagation of our common faith under other evangelical forms, we hail, with delight, every occasion on which we can express our large sympathies by directing the superfluity of our resources into other channels than our own. We are most glad to diffuse the blessings of the Gospel by all means, even though it should go forth clad in a costume not to our taste, or encumbered by excrescences which we condemn. So long as salvation by Christ is preached in simplicity and sincerity, we rejoice, and we more than rejoice; for we give the hand of assistance, whenever they need it, to the brethren from whom we dissent."

Such—putting out of the account a few

singularly-contracted spirits, is, I think, a fair interpretation of the conduct of serious Christians at the present time ; and we may read in it a very distinct recognition of the doctrine —and a most important doctrine it is—That no culpable compromise of principle is implied in aiding the spread of Christianity abroad under other forms than the one which, as individuals, we most approve. This capital rule of conduct has been unconsciously framed, rather under the dictation of sound feelings, than by the logic of reason.—I rest the whole stress of the argument pursued in these letters upon this foundation; and that I may not seem to draw too hasty an inference from facts, I must place the subject in several points of view.

In the first place, then, it may be affirmed generally, that whoever has contributed a mite to the support of a Mission, not conducted by his own party, or has given his presence and approving smile at the convocation of any such society, or has occupied a place on its hustings, or bestowed upon it an effort of his eloquence ;—whoever has uttered a sentiment of pleasure in hearing of the successes of other societies, or has breathed a pray-

er for the spread of the Gospel—a prayer not restricted to the exertions of his own party—that man has already trespassed as far over the bounds of religious scrupulosity as he would have occasion to do in falling in with the proposed plan of union. He has virtually declared, that he thinks it lawful, and even becoming to a Christian, to give his aid in promulgating what he deems a defective or encumbered system of doctrine and discipline. I request you, my dear friend, to fix your closest attention upon the facts to which I advert, and to show me wherein the inference I derive from them is unsound.

Or let it be imagined that, from whatever cause, the apparatus of some one of the existing Missionary Societies was broken up, and its foreign stations abandoned. I ask whether every one of the members of that dissolved society, or every one whose attachment to Christianity is rational and sincere, would not hold himself bound instantly to devote to some other society, the whole amount of his wonted contributions? Could any one, unless his heart were frozen in sectarianism, allow himself, under such circumstances, to say, "*My* Missionary Society is extinct;—I have, there-

fore, now no opportunity left me, conscientiously, for taking part in the great cause?" Such a conclusion, if it were not the cloak of niggardliness, would certainly be the expression of a worse than popish bigotry; worse, because it exists in the broad light of Protestantism. A Christian philanthropist is, no doubt, free to choose the mode in which he will promote the welfare of his fellow-creatures; but he would abhor to think himself free to withdraw from the labours of beneficence: he scorns to give ear to any plea that would exempt him from the demands of charity on his purse; he will break through every restraint of habit, or taste, or party preference, rather than be debarred from sharing in the blessedness of going about to do good.

It is then not an unlawful act to send abroad what we deem a defective or an encumbered form of Christianity. Nay, it would be unlawful to refuse to do so if the alternative were to propagate the Gospel in that form, or not at all. Indeed we may go a step further, and say it would be both lawful and laudable to act in this manner under such circumstances as the following.—Let it be supposed that, suddenly, an extensive and promising field of

exertion opened itself before some one of our Missionary Societies; and that this field, while it called for exertions on a large and costly scale, gave the most reasonable hopes of complete success. I ask then whether, in such a case, an appeal to the Christian world from the directors of the favoured society would be made in vain? Would the necessary aid actually be denied; or in granting such aid, would it be attempted, by any party, to embarrass the proceedings of the managers in the very moment of auspicious activity, by requiring them first to revise their modes and forms, and to substitute this observance and ceremony, for that? Would any one, whose heart is indeed warmed with the principles of our religion, make a demur in giving what he gave, or restrict the pounds and pence of his gratuity to such purposes only as it might least shock his punctilious zeal to promote? No such wretched caution, would, I think, be thought of, at such a moment; but rather the animating hope of at length witnessing an extensive triumph of the cross—whatever peculiarities of worship might attend it, would impetuously bear away all lesser feelings, and a torrent of liberality would flow towards the

scene of hopeful enterprise. Any other supposition than this might justly be deemed a calumny upon the religious public—a calumny contradicted by facts which every one recollects.

But in the case here supposed we have approached very near to the proposition actually before us; for a fair inference carries us from one position to the other.—It is affirmed, and surely on no very slight grounds, that a plan of co-operation, in which all party distinction should be merged, would greatly promote the spread of the Gospel among the heathen. To deny this probability is to contradict the voice of universal experience in all matters of difficult achievement. Here then is a demand made upon all parties to concede their peculiarities; and, for the promotion of the great cause in which we are engaged, to adopt those measures which are recommended by sound reason, and which common sense would long ago have led us to adopt, if sectarian interests had not stood in the way.

And now what is the obstacle that prevents our doing so, but the one which has already been overpassed, again and again, by all par-

ties? for all have often forgotten their scruples, and their preferences, and given their support to the glorious Gospel, by whomsoever proclaimed. "Unawares," we have "entertained the angel" of concord.—With a happy inconsideration we have dropped the badges of distinction; and in moments of excitement, conquered by the spirit of our religion, have joined hands with our brethren, without first asking whether or not they "follow with us."

The perplexing problem which synods might have discussed in vain during a session of twenty years, has been resolved by the spontaneity of our hearts; and it has been determined that a Christian, while he decidedly prefers certain modes of religion, and deliberately believes that those modes possess a valid claim to universal homage, may nevertheless, without any inconsistency, promote the spread of Christianity abroad by the agency of men who hold them in no esteem. Nay, it is virtually implied in the practice of the religious world at the present time, that to refuse such aid on urgent occasions would be grossly inconsistent with the spirit of our religion.

What is it then that actually prevents our acceding to the proposed plan of combina-

tion ? Not our respective scruples, for these have already been practically set at nought ; and we have all confessed the lawfulness of aiding the promulgation of our common faith under an imperfect or encumbered form. Churchmen have supported the missions of Dissenters ; Dissenters have contributed to those of Churchmen ; Congregationalists have helped to send out Wesleyan preachers ; Wesleyan eloquence has provoked Calvinistic audiences to greater zeal ; the practisers of sprinkling have subscribed towards Serampore translations ; and Baptists have given their gold to those who do not immerse !

But it is alleged that, although a Christian may accidentally support measures which he does not thoroughly approve ; yet, that he is bound by a due regard to his convictions to devote the bulk of his contributions, whether of personal service or pecuniary aid, to the diffusion of the specific form of doctrine and worship which he believes to be most agreeable to the divine will. Let this supposed obligation be fully admitted. On the present occasion we are not compelled to sift the reasons which seem to give it force ; for we may pass over it on higher ground. This supposed du-

ty must be granted to be conditional. A Christian can only be obliged to propagate his specific opinions abroad when he actually has the means of doing so ; but if he possesses no such opportunity ; if no missionary association exists among the members of his own communion ; or if his religious opinions are peculiar to himself ; and if he can neither himself go abroad as a teacher, nor is able to employ a substitute, the abstract obligation is plainly cancelled by the impracticability of discharging it. Nevertheless a Christian so circumstanced is not thereby absolved from the higher duty—or we should say, debarred from the privilege, of joining with others to diffuse the blessings of the Gospel through the world ; and if he cannot do it as he would, he will still do it as he can. Thus we stand relieved from the necessity of arguing the general question.

The supposed duty of promulgating our personal opinions is even to a still greater extent conditional ; as for instance—If the measures of a particular society were obviously so ill directed at home, or its sphere of foreign operations so unpropitiously circumstanced, as that all rational hope of success were excluded ;

while, at the same time, some other society, by superior discretion, by greater zeal, and by enjoying in a larger degree the blessing of heaven, were seen to be rapidly advancing on the course of prosperous exertion; so that every shilling contributed to its funds might be calculated to possess an infinite value, then, and in such a case, the dictate of a genuine zeal for our common faith, and of a sincere benevolence towards our fellow men, would lead a Christian to divert his alms from the channel of unproductive expenditure, and to direct them towards the field of copious fruitfulness. He would do so, even though the opinions propagated by the one society were, to a tittle, his own, while the forms or the discipline sent out by the other contained much that he thought decidedly reprehensible. Whoever would not thus decide in the circumstances supposed, while he professes to believe that, without the Gospel the people perish, and admits that its saving efficacy inheres in other forms of Christianity than his own, has surely never conceived a thought more capacious than might pass through a needle's eye: his reptile conceptions, surely, are capable of nothing more excursive than to crawl in

and out of his church, through a crevice.— Surely such a man has never solemnly meditated on the vast futurity that stretches before the human family ! Surely he has no knowledge of the sad ruin in which human nature is lying—no idea of the hope set before us in the Gospel ! Certainly the word—Eternity, has never dwelt on the hearing of such a man. Nay, he must be destitute of common benevolence :—nay, he must be devoid of common sense ; for he holds the egregious absurdity that some of the parts of Christianity are of more importance than the whole. We need not, however, arrest the course of our argument by attempting to vanquish the obdurate bigotry of any such persons, if such there be, since the sense of the great body of Christians is decidedly opposed to a conduct and temper of this kind.

The ground is then clear before us on which to establish our ultimate proposition ; for if a high probability of success in propagating what is deemed a defective form of Christianity outweighs or supersedes the supposed duty of promulgating what we think a more perfect form of it—when the opportunity of doing so is removed ; then we may say—that if a new

constitution of missions on the principle of combination and of the division of labour promises —as unquestionably it does, to procure much greater successes than can be hoped for while the present sectarian system is adhered to, then are all Christians bound by the duty they owe to their Lord, and by the duty of charity they owe to their deluded brethren of all nations, to adopt the better system, even though, in doing so, they must severally consent to send abroad forms of government, and modes of worship, which they approve much less than their own.

I affirm then that the obstacles which at first sight seem to prevent the adoption of the plan proposed in these letters, have already been *virtually* nullified by the practice and better feelings of Christians. And certainly the feelings inspired by preaching the Gospel among the heathen are found to place party distinctions in a point of view extremely disparaging to their importance. The uniform testimony of the most respectable Missionaries is to this effect:—“While standing among the heathen,” say they, “and while surrounded by the appalling spectacles of a horrid idolatry, and while proclaiming the pure and sa-

ving doctrine of the cross to the debauched and fanatical victims of dæmon worship, the questions which divide the Christian Church fade utterly from our view.—From the ground on which we stand we can no longer discern them ; or they seem in the extremest degree trivial.” Let it be granted that, according to the rigidness of school-logic, this mode of speaking is somewhat erroneous. Nevertheless it contains, in substance, a most momentous truth—a capital principle, which, conversant as we are with ecclesiastical frivolities, few of us are qualified to appreciate at its proper value. But, not to insist upon generalities, it may be observed that, of the several causes of dissension among us, some belong so entirely to England, and to its constitutions, that they vanish in the viewless winds the moment we leave the British Channel ;—they can no more be transported to India, or to the Islands of the Southern Ocean, than we can carry there the ices of Scotland, or the fogs of the Thames. Other questions, on which we divide, are superseded by the inartificial state of the nations we are labouring to convert, and among whom it would be egregiously absurd, as well as culpable, to intro-

duce the leaven of abstruse logomachy. There are other questions which the discretion of every sound-minded Missionary will lead him to keep out of the sight of those whose respect for our religion he would not impair.

No process of attenuation is perhaps more exquisite than that by which the filmy slenderness of sectarianism is wire-drawn to the distance of ten or twelve thousand miles. When we come among a people savage or half civilized, and intellectually rude, by whom nothing but the very elements of religion can possibly be apprehended, and who must enjoy the benefits of instruction during many years before they can be qualified to form a judgment on questions of abstruse or perplexing controversy, we must, of necessity, hold all such questions in abeyance for a length of time. But here it must be well noted that, though it is impossible to put our new converts in possession of the grounds of theological argument, *nothing is more easy than to infect them at once with the poison of religious spleen*; and while we fail in our attempts to convey to them that sort of intelligent conviction which, among ourselves, mollifies the asperities of

separation, they may imbibe, with the utmost readiness, the spirit of party. We may indeed propagate sectarianism among Hindoos or Hottentots ; but it can only be in the unmitigated form of a blind bigotry, devoid of reason and suavity.

I think I could engage to bring home from India, or from Africa, a bundle of sermons and expositions, and private conversations, taken verbatim from our Missionaries of various denominations ; and after expunging, perhaps, here and there a phrase, offer the collection to the Christian world, and challenge the several sects to claim their own out of the mass. Mistakes much more improbable have often been fallen into than that, for example, of the Congregationalist, who, in looking over such a parcel, should lay claim to the discourses of the Church Missionary ; while a Churchman, perhaps, would challenge the sermon of a Dissenter ; the Wesleyan those of the Baptist ; and possibly the Baptist might lay his hand on the instructions of a teacher who sprinkles rather than dip ! Thus it would appear that the very opinions which, at vast cost, and extreme injury to the great cause, we have shipped off to China, or the Pacific, are

so unsubstantial or evanescent, that we cannot recognize them when again brought back to us. For what valuable consideration is it then, that we are dividing our efforts till they become feeble and inefficient ? For what are we putting contempt upon Christianity in the sight of the profane at home, and of heathens abroad ? For what are we stretching our differences from one side of the globe to the other ? For what are we putting in peril the conversion of the world at this auspicious moment, when Heaven has loudly called us to the work ? We are submitting to all this damage, and incurring all this hazard, and putting all this dishonour upon the Gospel for the perpetuation of opinions which, in fact, we find it hard to preserve from evaporation ere they have crossed the line.

LETTER III.

"FOR ARE YE NOT CARNAL."

I have affirmed, my dear friend, *first*, that the union of evangelical Christians, without distinction of party in the Missionary enterprise, is necessary as the means of managing so vast a business efficiently; and have then endeavoured to shew you that such a union is not at all impracticable; or at least that it is not forbidden by conscientious scruples. I now proceed to adduce reasons of another kind, in themselves weighty enough to secure the compliance of the Christian world with the proposed reform.

In the first place then the merging of party distinctions when we go to preach the Gospel to the heathen is absolutely necessary to preserve Christianity from dishonour in their eyes,

and to prevent the origination of heresies and divisions among our converts.

The mischiefs that must, in the end, spring from the diffusion of a sectarized Christianity have not, as yet, had time or space to be developed ; but they will appear whenever the infant church abroad shall come to lengthen its cords, and strengthen its stakes. Even in those islands or insulated regions where the work of evangelization rests exclusively in the hands of one and the same party, it must happen—unless some disingenuousness is practised, that the divided state of the church at home will at length become known ; and it will be extremely difficult to prevent the fact from presenting itself in a startling point of view to simple-minded converts. But in India, and in other countries where the agents of our several societies come in contact, the sectarianism of English Christians must presently obtrude itself upon the notice of the converted Hindoo : nor can the most ingenious glossings hinder it from making a deep and unfavourable impression on his mind.—He is taught that the religion he has imbibed is derived from a single, intelligible book—a book given by inspiration of God ; and he reads in

it that it should be the distinguishing feature of the Christian religion that the true disciples of Christ "love one another," and are at peace among themselves. How is it then that those who mutually acknowledge each other *as the true disciples of Christ*, and who exchange the tokens of affection as often as they meet, are yet actually at variance ;—and so much at variance that they can by no means unite in the same measures for spreading their religion ; but on the contrary are actually compelled to have recourse to the cumbrous, and costly, and ruinous method of despatching separate embassies, so vast a distance, to idolatrous nations ; as if there were scarcely any thing held in common by the different sects of Christians ? Now there are two ways in which the perplexities and inquiries that must arise among intelligent converts may be met :—the one belonging to the present system ; and the other to the system advocated in these letters.

On the present system ; not only must the fact of our divisions be acknowledged, but the serious nature of the questions on which we are at variance must be confessed ; otherwise no sufficient reason can be given for the party

measures we pursue : and it must be granted, moreover, that, although pious and learned men have, age after age, been employed in discussing the controverted points, there is no more probability now than ever, of their being determined. Must not such a confession greatly shake the confidence of thoughtful, but imperfectly informed men ? can it fail to abate their respect, both for ourselves and for our religion ? and is it not full-fraught with the infection, as well of doubt, as of discord ? And yet no statement essentially different from this can be made ; or if ingenious concealments were attempted, they could be of no lasting avail ; for the minds of men are always much more forcibly affected by obvious facts, than by intricate apologies ; and so long as it cannot be denied that the Christians of England are divided into parties, and that these parties are unable to unite, even when actuated by the strong and pure motives which impel them to send Missionaries to the other side of the globe, it will be utterly in vain to talk of the cordiality which exists among us.

But now let it be imagined that the proposed union of Christians in the Missionary work

were effected, and that no party name—no party difference were ever sent out of England. In this case we might, without danger, without shame, and even with honour and advantage, explain to our converts the true state of things at home : we might, for example, address them in such terms as the following.

—“It is indeed true that the Christians of England differ in their manner of interpreting certain passages of Scripture, relating to matters of discipline and worship. But that they do not deem these differences to be of very serious consequence, is proved by the fact which you see before your eyes—that when the conversion of their brethren in distant lands is in question, they lay aside every variance, and cordially join in their endeavours to spread the Gospel. At the same time the differences which exist among us serve to give a greater value to our agreement on matters of doctrine; for it proves that we exercise perfect freedom of judgment, and are exempt from restraint in the expression of opinion: our consent therefore on the great articles of religion furnishes a convincing proof of the perspicuity of the Scriptures on points of importance ; since all who devoutly read the Bible come

to the same conclusions in regard to them. Moreover the differences which distinguish us, though they are to be regretted, still serve to illustrate the power of the Gospel to produce concord among its adherents ; for if it had not a strong influence of this kind, the several parties, instead of concurring, as you see, in the same measures, would act independently of each other, and more as rivals than as allies. Having given you this candid statement, we may confidently advise you to entertain no anxiety relative to those questionable points which we do not at present bring under your notice : the time will come when you will have made those acquisitions in biblical and historical learning which are requisite to the forming of a competent judgment on subjects of this class."

I ask which of these two explanations would make the more favourable impression upon the susceptible, half-informed, and perhaps suspicious minds of new converts from Gentilism ? Who can hesitate in preferring the latter to the former ? It is not only free from occasion of offence, but it even sheds a glory upon Christianity, and eminently illustrates its power and excellence, and vouches for the

candour and simplicity of the motive which impels us to preach the Gospel in every land.

On the contrary, the former statement, sadly confirmed by the visible fact of schism, transported from England to India, could not fail to engender the most disheartening surmises; or, if it did not convey the poison of suspicion, would inevitably impart the infection of religious animosity. This probable event demands the most serious attention of all who support Missionary Societies. A singular thoughtlessness has hitherto been indulged in regard to it. We have gone out, carrying the torch of divine truth in one hand; forgetful that we bore in the other the smouldering brand of theological strife. And here, my dear friend, I must request you to correct me if I err in the anticipations which I entertain. I read the book of human nature, and the book of church history, and without daring to presume that human nature will show itself altogether a different thing in India from what it is in Europe, I calculate probabilities, with a strong fear of not being found a false prophet of dismal things.

Should the nations of India receive from us the religion of the Scriptures; but receive it

under the system we are now pursuing, it is much more than we have any right to hope for, that the very worst evils will not in time spring up from the seeds of theological discord which we are so unadvisedly scattering in the East.

It is very true that in modern times religious controversy has been stripped almost entirely of its hateful qualities. But we may be assured that the mischief is latent, not extinct, and shall surely reappear when circumstances favour its development. You tell me that discord and heresy may spring up spontaneously; for they did so in the churches planted by the Apostles: yes; but shall we therefore wantonly carry them in our hands? If offences must needs come; at least let them not be traced to us. Let us not necessitate a sad result, which otherwise, might be deemed only probable.

Really one might imagine that the confident anticipation so generally entertained at present, of an approaching era of universal love, had operated to deprive Christians of all caution in the measures they are pursuing abroad. We so firmly believe that the golden age is about to commence, that we fear not to scat-

ter the elements of feud, trusting that before they can work any harm, the period of Millennial peace will have commenced. Let us mix tares with the wheat; for a summer is coming which shall allow the growth of no weeds! But on what solid ground is it that we proceed in assuming that those dire mischiefs which so often have desolated the Western Church, have spent all their force on this side the globe, and shall never be brought forth by the fervent suns of the East? Do we know infallibly that fierce animosities, and cruel intolerance, shall never again burst from the doors of discordant synods—that theological difference shall never again issue in theological hatred? Who dares deny the possibility of a sad repetition of the horrors which heretofore, in our own island, have affronted the sun? How amazing then—how culpable, is our temerity in daring to carry out to a new soil the germs of those very disagreements which, though now mollified, yet bear fresh upon them the scars of deadly strife! Our fathers, of two or three generations back, pursued each other to the stake, to the gibbet, to the rack, on account of these very diversities of opinion, or dissimilarities of wor-

ship which we (for conscience sake truly) are sending off to the ends of the earth ! Perilous infatuation ! may heaven in its compassion defeat our folly, and provide for the people of the East a way of escape from the deadly consequences of such inconsideration !

Either then we are quite thoughtless of the future ; or we are trusting to some miraculous interposition to prevent the *natural consequences* of the course we pursue ; or we go on as we have begun because we deem it impossible to do better. I deny this impossibility ;—or else affirm that impossibilities should be surmounted, rather than that the heathen should receive from us a sectarized Christianity. Miserable delusion—or worse, hypocrisy, of the man who pleads reasons of conscience for proceedings so pestilent ! But I should return to the tone of moderation ;—the infatuating power of inveterate errors is incalculable ; otherwise we should not so generally, and so long have been blind to the enormous impropriety of propagating our English schisms in new regions. I am willing to rest the necessity of effecting a new model of missions upon this single ground.

But again ;—the plan of a Catholic union for foreign missions is powerfully recommended by its tendency to produce a favourable effect upon the minds of persons at home, hitherto hostile, or indifferent, to Christianity.

There can be no consistency in professing to be actuated by a burning zeal for the conversion of Hindoos and Caffres, while we are indifferent to the infidelity and impiety which meet the eye around our homes, and often, alas ! within them. A Christian must not be reckless in regard to one immortal, and say he is compassionately solicitous for the salvation of another. His zeal must know no distinction of place or nation ; or if it knows any, it must give its preference to those who stand within the nearest relationships. But even if the conversion of the heathen were the darling object of our exclusive endeavours, nothing could more directly tend to promote our design than to win, by all means, the co-operation of those thousands of our countrymen who, at present, deny the aid they might furnish, less from deliberate hostility, than because “they know not what they do ;” and partly, perhaps, because the missionary en-

terprise has not yet presented itself under so fair an aspect as it might.

Religious persons who mix exclusively in society of their own sort, and who have no intimate and undisguised intercourse with intelligent, but irreligious men, can form no correct estimate of the magnitude of the injury inflicted upon tens, and hundreds of thousands by the inconsistencies and discords of the Christian world. It is true that the plea for irreligion, which is ordinarily derived from this source, is too palpably sophistical to have any influence over a sound understanding—if it were not backed by the prejudices of a heart at enmity with God. Nevertheless this plea, in point of fact, proves itself to be fatally valid, and in the actual state of religious profession, it is always a too easy task for the caviller to pick up facts which give it a show of plausibility. When the proper evidences of Christianity have been urged upon the objector with irresistible force, he makes good his retreat, even with an air of triumph, from what he feels to be the untenable ground of infidelity, and takes refuge, as if in perfect security, in some such evasion as this: “Well, when Christians have agreed among them-

selves what Christianity is, we will give it a hearing." If it be replied that all those whose spirit and conduct prove them to be the sincere disciples of Christ, *are* actually agreed in whatever is of most importance; then it is vauntingly rejoined—"But if they are indeed agreed in things important, why, on account of things unimportant, do they stand, from age to age, divided into parties, and so put contempt upon the primary article of Christian morals?" Thus it is, that, in spite of every explanation which can be given, the notorious fact of the divided state of the Christian body, snatches the weapon of conviction from our hands, as often as we attempt to vanquish gainsayers. But this, alas! is a disadvantage and an opprobrium under which we must be content to labour, perhaps for a century to come.—God grant a shorter date to the error of his people! To return: though we cannot at once remedy the wide-spreading evils of schism, the measure proposed in these letters, and which, for its own sake, is desirable, as well as practicable, would go very far towards removing all occasion of offence. A public and formal act on the part of the several evangelical sects, whereby they should

consent to hold all their differences in abeyance, for the express purpose of facilitating the progress of the Gospel abroad, would bring more honour upon our religion than has accrued to it in any way since the times of the martyrs. So unquestionable a zeal for Christianity, apart from sectarianism, and even at the cost of particular predilections, could not fail to awaken a great degree of attention:—it would confound malignant cavillers;—conciliate the prejudiced, and happily dissipate the distressing perplexities of thousands who now are the pitiable victims of the scandals that deform the profession of religion. Are not these reasons weighty enough to obtain a hearing ere we resolve anew to persist in our disgraceful discords? Should not the ruin of souls at home make us pause in our path when we are setting out to convert the heathen?



Men are influenced in the judgments they form, immensely more by inferences drawn from notorious facts, than by even the very best arguments that are shut up in books.—The argument for the truth of Christianity is perfect: no chain of reasoning can be more complete; yet it fails to command universal

assent ; for where it rests, it attracts the attention only of those who scarcely need to be convinced : others leave it on the shelf, while they pursue their course of pleasure or ambition. We want some signal display of the power and excellence of Christian motives ; and with this view, nothing, hardly, could have a better effect than such a relinquishment of party distinctions, and for such a purpose, as is here recommended. Perhaps even a combination of Christians, still preserving the old lines of separation at home, while they pass over them for promoting the Gospel abroad, would have more force as an instance of the power of Christianity, than as if an entire amalgamation of parties had first taken place.

The co-operation of sects in the Bible Society has certainly done great honour to the spirit of the times. Nevertheless, as an instance of Christian unanimity, the example is essentially defective ; for in joining together to circulate the Scriptures, without note or comment, we have abandoned nothing but those prejudices and aversions, to persist in which, when they might be fairly relinquished, would be utterly disgraceful to men bearing

the Christian name. Mean-while, not a single step has been taken on the course of real concession or mutual forbearance.—In the eye of the world—though the *feeling* be different, it is as if a conference of hostile personages were held on neutral ground, and under the protection of a truce, for the transaction of some necessary business, common to the belligerants:—weapons are laid aside, and compliments are exchanged, and expressions of personal friendship are given and taken, but peace is not in the assembly.

In the eye of the world also, and in the view of those who do not, or who will not use discrimination, the simultaneous, but unconnected efforts now making by the several sects to spread the Gospel abroad, do not show a very fair face; for this extraordinary zeal, in the form it assumes, may as easily be attributed to the spirit of rivalry, as to the spirit of expansive beneficence. But were the proposed Missionary Union to take place, an unanswerable refutation would be given to this false and injurious supposition:—it must be a zeal for the very substance of religion, not for the form of it, which prompts such a sacrifice; and it would be manifest that we are so deeply

convinced of the excellence and necessity of the faith we profess, that we would infinitely rather publish it under a form we do not wholly approve, than not at all. It is this very proof of a heart-felt conviction on the part of the religious, that is needed to awaken the attention of the irreligious.

Once again : the proposed coalescence of parties for the promotion of Missions is in the highest degree desirable, inasmuch as its tendency would be to bring about the union of Christians at home.

There are those who think they discern pretty clearly the source of that erroneous assumption which seems to justify or to palliate Church division. But subjects of this class have been too often discussed, to permit of their being brought forward anew with any great hope of a favourable result. Events, not books, must bring us back into the path of concord. Meanwhile, it is in our power to adopt a preliminary measure, in itself, as we have seen, highly desirable, which would set Church union in the most recommendatory light, and almost irresistibly conduct us towards it. While acting together under the proposed new plan of combination, we should

have constantly before our eyes a demonstration of the truth that Christians, though holding, as individuals, a diversity of opinion on many points, may very safely and very advantageously join hands in a good work ; and that, without harm or inconvenience, all may, *for the sake of a good work*, lay aside many things to which they have been long accustomed, and are fondly attached, and may bear with many things which they think reprehensible, or susceptible of amendment. But if they may thus co-operate, why not communicate ?—if they may rally around the standard of philanthropy, why may they not meet before the throne of mercy ? Why need those worship apart, who can do good together ? Are the delights and benefits which belong to the communion of saints unworthy of the same sort of forbearance, and concession, which have been yielded as the purchase of the benefits of mutual aid ? It would be *felt*, if not logically proved, that Christianity gains infinitely more by the union of its friends—even though in uniting they make some sacrifice of opinion, than it can possibly gain by their dissords ; even though by means of dissension,

certain opinions and practices (deemed important) are valiantly maintained.

The inevitable result of combined labours would be to triturate walls of partition. "We are met," would Christians say, "to promote a cause which is dear to us all alike: and if in any thing we differ, we agree vastly more than we differ." The habitual utterance of sentiments such as this, would, ere long, give an irresistible preponderance to all that is great and substantial, when weighed against what is subordinate or trivial: and though certain controversies might not perhaps be brought to an argumentative issue, they would be overpassed, and left behind; and even if they continued to create diversity of opinion, they would cease to be thought of as grounds of separation.

I will venture to advance a step further, and to affirm it as highly probable that, when once things come into this track, a perfectly satisfactory solution of many existing difficulties will speedily be obtained. My dear friend, I request your especial attention to this conjecture. Let me state the case distinctly.—It is indeed a most perplexing spectacle to see a succession of honest and well-informed men,

age after age, concentrating all the force of their minds on the very same evidence, and nevertheless coming to opposite conclusions. This circumstance would not be so strange if both parties confessed the question about which they disagree to be of a doubtful kind, and acknowledged, on both sides, that the evidence is somewhat ambiguous and obscure. But alas! both loudly proclaim that the reasons of their opinion are perspicuous as the light of noon. Here, then, is our riddle ; for it is equally amazing that wise men should draw opposite conclusions where there is really no obscurity ; or that they should deny obscurity where it actually exists. One is ready to ask—why is it that the promised Spirit of truth does not lead these good men in the same path ? Do they not severally and sincerely ask for the heavenly guidance ? Yes, it is true, that they ask—but they ask amiss, inasmuch as they have not placed themselves in a position proper for receiving the boon. Let him who prays to be informed of the mind of Christ on certain matters of discipline or worship, first yield obedience to the unquestionable, the unambiguous law of Christ, which demands that the bond of union among all who sin-

cerely love Him should, by no means, be broken on account of matters of "doubtful disputation." Shall the Lord interpose to decide a controversy which is allowed to generate divisions in flagrant violation of his explicit and intelligible rule of Church communion? Who can suppose it? Those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity must first join heart *and hand*, and cast away, with abhorrence, all those names of men that are now called upon them. There must first be effected, not merely a restoration of cordial affection; but a public, a formal, and a *visible* reconciliation; and then shall that promised light be given which is needed to dispel the darkness that seems to rest upon some subordinate articles of our faith. The way of the Lord is ordinarily first to obtain submission to his unquestioned will, and then to grant those advancements in knowledge which are desired. I am not surely presumptuous in saying that this suggestion deserves the serious consideration of those whom it may concern; and especially of those who, by office and personal character, sustain extensive responsibilities.

I would even hazard the prediction that ere

five years have elapsed, after a public union of all sincere Christians has been effected, scarcely a doubt will remain on any theological or practical question that can be deemed at all important. It is, I think, a most delusive expectation, entertained by some persons, that the peace of the Church will be affected by the *argumentative* determination of existing controversies. Is it not much more probable that a revival of fervent piety will, if the phrase may be used, fuse the Church into a state of union; and that then the spirit of discrimination and of sound judgment in doubtful matters shall be conferred upon it?

Allow me, for a moment, to pursue a pleasing and curious supposition. Let it then be imagined that our efforts to diffuse the Gospel have been crowned with very extensive success, and that large and flourishing churches have been formed in countries at present overshadowed by Paganism; and let it be supposed that the true doctrine of Christian union is understood and maintained in these churches; that separation is unknown, and that the blessed fruits of peace spring up on every side. What must, in such a case, happen, but that we should begin at home to

covet the same felicity? Is it possible that we should remain contentedly pent up, as heretofore, within our little enclosures, while we contemplated the joyous harmony of the churches we had planted? Or if we remain insensible to the edifying example, would not the spirit of missionary zeal revert to its source, and those to whom we had conveyed the Gospel send it back to us in its primitive beauty? The warm-hearted and unsophisticated Christians of christianized India, or Persia, or Africa, would visit us, and, travelling from county to county of sectarian England, call together the disunited congregations of each town and city, affectionately upbraiding them with their needless and guilty schisms, and joining the hands of all, as the mediators of charity, "beseech us by the Lord to be all of one mind," and not merely to love one another in word, or in heart, but to afford the natural demonstration of love—undisturbed communion. Thus it would happen that, as if to check our glorying as the keepers and dispensers of divine truth, we should be compelled to submit to the humiliation of receiving it back better than we had sent it forth.

Finally, merging of party differences, expressly for the purpose of removing whatever might hinder the spread of Christianity, would have a powerful influence in dissipating and putting to shame that fatal spirit of trifling in religion which, in every age, and in our own not less, has so easily beset the Church.

How quickly, how readily do we substitute any thing that wears the dress of godliness in the place of its infinite realities ! One would wish that, on the walls of every edifice consecrated to Christian worship, there were inscribed the apostolic injunction—"Be not children in understanding ; but in understanding be men." When shall we learn the rudiments of the arithmetic of the sanctuary ? When be able to calculate the immense spaces of the skies, and be disenchanted of the delusion which leads us to think a volute on a pillar of the church—because it is near, larger than a world, because it is distant ? But how should we conceive of the things of eternity, how even duly estimate the great matters of common morality, how be rightly affected by the miseries of the millions of the family of man ;—how can we thus feel, think, and

act, like men, while we are stickling upon phrases, and if not now sparring about matters of form, doing much worse—persisting in our several peculiarities, after we have become thoroughly convinced of the error of those who, in an age of strife, divided the Church on account of them? We sleep, and are most idly dreaming while the fire smoulders that shall consume all things! Too many of the precious moments given us for effecting the escape of ourselves and of our brethren have been lost: the time is come to awake.

While Christians, within their several compartments, like groups of children in the four corners of the play-ground, are amusing themselves with the superior excellence, and the immaculate purity, and divine authority of their modes of government and forms of worship, and are wondering at the infatuation of those who do not see things, so obvious, in the same light as they do, it is impossible that the splendours of heaven should attract their regards: it is impossible but that the overwhelming facts, brought within the sphere of our vision in the Scriptures, should fail of making a full impression on their hearts. The mind

of man is not so capacious, is not so comprehensive, is not so nicely poised upon its centre of movement, as that it may embrace, at once, the great and the small, the finite and the infinite; or, at the same time be busied in trifles, and occupied with affairs of moment. By very necessity of nature the soul of the bigot belongs to the class of reptiles; and this assertion holds good of the entire *genus*; for whether the creature be as venomous as the adder, or as harmless as the mole, still he can do nothing better than crawl. Or let it be granted, that one man in a million may actually be found whose mind, at once gigantic and exquisitely finished, can grasp the minutest object, without losing hold of the immense. Nevertheless, unquestionably, the generality of men have no such nice faculty; they must needs make their choice, and employ themselves either upon primary, or upon secondary matters:—their stars forbid that they should give heed to both. It may be affirmed with the confidence due to a mathematical axiom, that every controversy agitated in the Church on points of inferior moment, makes a reduction—often an immense reduction, from the regard paid to the great

objects of faith. Away then with the trifler, who pleads conscience and conviction for petty scruples ! he is the destroyer of souls ! A proposition, the converse of the one just advanced, might with some limitations, be affirmed, namely—that whenever a trivial controversy is quashed, the attention it has absorbed is, as it were, redeemed, and set free to be fixed on higher objects.

Yet to quash controversy by power, can, under no imaginable circumstances, produce good ; nor is any thing gained when diversities of opinion fade away beneath the torpors of religious indifference. But a deliberate relinquishment of discords, or of the forms of discord, without a relinquishment of private opinion, and for the very sake of objects infinitely important, could not fail to bring with it a highly enhanced feeling towards those vast realities, for the sake of which, the concession was made. The interests of eternity weigh with every man, very much in proportion to the amount of the sacrifice which he makes to secure them. And if a sacrifice of worldly interests is found commonly to produce an increase of serious feeling ; so, not less, would a surrender of those prejudices

and preferences which, in the present instance are all that need be laid on the altar of charity, probably be attended by an elevation, and a deepening, and an expansion of our religious convictions.

If once we had brought ourselves to consent to aid in sending forth the Gospel among the heathen under a garb less to our taste than the one to which we are accustomed ; and if, in order that we might by all means save our perishing fellow-men, we had submitted to shock our educational predilections, we should from that moment, apprehend in a more vivid manner than heretofore, the *substance* of the enterprize in which we are engaged. We should love the Gospel better; we should love our heathen brethren more fervently, and feel more keenly the sadness of their spiritual condition. It would be as when a man who has been accustomed to peruse his Bible only in his vernacular tongue, acquires another, and another language, and reads the great message of God, expressed in a new, and again in a new manner: at first he is incommoded and hurt by the loss of accustomed phrases, and by the strangeness of the new ones. But after a while, his mind, with vast

advantage, disengages itself from the swath of words, and, with a burst of new joy, recognizes the same great and precious realities of the Gospel beneath the diversity of the medium. By forcing ourselves to embrace Christianity under another garb, we should fix our view upon its essential excellence; and having turned away our sight from things external, should look with a more penetrating glance into the vast futurity : we should "see things that are afar off," and the glaring shows of the present time would fade more from our sight, and divert us less.

We have none of us, in fact, nearly so vivid a sympathy for woes spiritual, as for the sufferings of the body. How common a thing is it, when some sudden demand is made to administer relief to physical wretchedness, that we all rush forward in benevolent recklessness, trampling down partitions and punctilious forms ; and many a kind-hearted sectarist, rigid as the wintry stream, when you meet him on the by-path of his religious peculiarities, melts down into charity on the cry of the miserable, and is even seen to take a pride in displaying his readiness to sin against scruples, while he lends his hand and purse

to the children of want.—Indeed, my dear friend, I think so highly of the genuine humanity of the great mass of religionists, as to believe that (to take one example among many) if the abolition of slavery might be purchased at the price of their severally consenting to worship God henceforward in modes they approved less than their own, they would, almost to a man, violate their ecclesiastical consciences. Oh that we could always, and on every occasion, be as inconsistent as our better feelings sometimes make us!

If we could but, as we ought, see and feel the spiritual, as we see the natural, not a moment would be lost by the Christian world in throwing aside—even with hasty fear and abhorrence, those embarrassments which, at present, more than the oppositions of secular power, more than the slenderness of pecuniary resources, more than the malice and craft of the infernal spirit, hinder the spread of the Gospel through the world. If things spiritual, in the force of reality, rested on our hearts, we should in a moment start out from our niches of marble formality, and press up to the altar of philanthropy, each bringing

the loathed bundle of his prejudices in his hand, to be taken up no more.

In the instance that I have just above supposed, is it not certain, that the man who should refuse to give up his scruples at the call of humanity, would, in doing so, undergo an induration of his sympathies? The act of stoical pharisaism in "passing by on the other side," lest, while giving aid to a stranger in distress, he should contract some ceremonial pollution, would bring a callousness on every kindly feeling—if indeed he possessed any such feeling to be so damaged.

The case before us is of a parallel kind:—and if a proposition were actually agitated for giving effect to the plan recommended in these Letters, and if the proposition obtained powerful support, and won a majority of voices, it may be affirmed that the minority who should resolve to adhere to rigid principles, how honest soever their dissent might be, would, in dissenting, sustain an irreparable injury in their Christian sensibilities, and become far less qualified than before, to take part in the labours of foreign evangelization.

I venture, on the other hand, to anticipate, that the actual adoption of the plan of Cath-

olic union for the propagation of the Gospel, would bring with it a most auspicious revival of spiritual religion. We should feel, with much greater force than ever, the influence of high motives ; we should be thrown directly upon all that is vast, elevated, and pure in the objects of our faith. Having “put away childish things,” and renounced “beggarly elements,” and imposed silence upon “vain janglings,” and scorned scholastic refinements, and loathed lifeless forms, we should feel that we must also renounce all those inferior and corrupting motives of ostentation or personal ambition, which are so apt to mingle themselves with our best impulses. We should sicken at praise ; tremble to receive or to offer adulation ; spurn levity, and shudder at the very thought of being swayed in works of charity by motives of worldly interest.

It now only remains, my dear friend, that I should explain with more precision than I have yet done, the arrangements that it would be necessary to make, in carrying the New Model of Missions into effect.

LETTER IV.

"I AM MADE ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN, THAT I MIGHT BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME: AND THIS I DO FOR THE GOSPEL'S SAKE."

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is not possible, nor would it be desirable if it were possible, to strip from Christianity every thing but its essential principles; nor could we send among the heathen a bare announcement of salvation, and nothing else. Of necessity, the glad tidings of peace through Jesus Christ, must carry with them, go where they may, a mode of worship, and a form of social combination; even the simplest services have their customs and orders, and the simplest government their officers and subordination. These must be carried out with us, when we go forth to preach the Gospel'; for it were an infantile folly, or a sheer affectation to propose that our missionaries should stand amidst barbarous, or half-civilized tribes,

whose crude notions and ignorance must always lead them astray, where they are not led by the hand, and to say to them, “We have made known to you the great subject of our mission—the life to come, and the terms of pardon; now we must leave you, without instruction or bias, to adopt such modes of worship and forms of government as shall seem to you best;—in these *nice matters* we dare not guide you.” Nothing could be more preposterous or absurd than to hold this prudish language to our converts from heathenism.

But if we may neither send Christianity without a form, nor leave our new converts to frame one for themselves, shall we convoke deputies from the several communities, and contrive a new model of worship, and frame a new platform of government, such as may win the approval of all parties? Who is there so ignorant of history and of the world as to anticipate a happy issue from such a measure? The actual result would almost certainly be an interminable and acrimonious controversy, the din of which would awaken the formidable ghosts of obsolete polemics. Scarcely five men of our times have wisdom

or grace enough to qualify them for such a business ;—even were they left to themselves in carrying it forward ; and certainly not if embarrassed by the folly and the heat of fifty or a hundred assessors. In that case they would inevitably withdraw themselves from the scene of fruitless jangling ere an article was finally settled.

There remains then no hope of effecting a union of Missionary exertions, unless we adopt the principle of waving altogether the discussion of old controverted points, and of submitting, for the attainment of an object so glorious, to some one *existing* model of church government and worship.

In selecting this one model, it is of course necessary to dismiss entirely the idea of founding our preference of that which we choose upon its alleged, or supposed, intrinsic superiority, or purity, or scriptural authority, or peculiar adaptation to the specific purpose for which it is to be used. No pretension of this sort could possibly win universal suffrage, or be made the basis of harmony. Another, and a more commodious rule of choice must be had recourse to ; and there are always ready at hand *lower reasons* of preference

which happily save the compromise of principle, and the violation of personal feelings, and prevent the rending up of prejudice. For example—when a question of precedence is to be determined, it is not asked—who is the worthiest man, or the wisest, in the company; but the place of honour is readily conceded to him, be he personally wise or not, who already possesses some *accidental* pre-eminence to which others may pay deference without seeming to confess personal inferiority. In such cases it is perfectly understood by all, that the concession is made in the spirit of courtesy, and for the sake of convenience, irrespectively of what might be the decision of absolute right and reason. If ever reluctance is shown to submit to any such conventional arrangement in matters of honour, resistance arises, not among the noble, or the well-bred, or those who might best support a claim on the ground of personal merit; but among those whose arrogance rests on the broad bottom of their ignorance and ineptitude.

The common sense of mankind universally acknowledges this mode of election to the place of honour among competing powers or persons, to be a good one. In the instance

before us, no perplexity could arise in bringing it to bear.—We should not say to the several Dissenting communities,—“Concede to the Established Church because its forms and discipline are more Scriptural, or more edifying than your own ;” but we should say, “Yield, because some such concession is indispensable to the large success of the Missionary cause ; and yield to the Established Church, because it stands among you already possessed, by common courtesy at least, of *a visible precedence* : and yield to it, moreover, because principle will be much less compromised in so doing on the ground of courtesy, than as if any one of the several forms of dissent, which possess no such ostensible claim, were hoisted up above the others.”

There might even be adduced another reason of the proposed concession, which Churchmen, without discredit, might urge, and of which Dissenters might, with honour to themselves, acknowledge the force.—Is it not, by usage universal, the custom for lighter carriages to swerve from their line of road, in favour of such as could not, without difficulty or peril, pull out of their rut ?—Do the Dissenters pride themselves on their freedom

from the restraints, entanglements, and burden, of statutes ecclesiastical?—do they glory in spurning human enactments?—do they abhor to link religion with secular interests?—do they rejoice to admit no forms which, as individuals, they have no power to revise or refuse?—then let them, on this most worthy occasion, and on the loud call of pagan misery, use their boasted liberty for the best imaginable purpose. Now let it be their glory and their honourable boast that, when the advancement of our common Christianity was in question, they *could* and they *did* lay their several preferences on the altar of charity. Is there a triumph to be won on the field of theological strife that can equal in true brilliancy the one that would be obtained by such a concession, prompted by such a motive? Scarcely ought the glory of martyrdom to rank above it:—an offering this—grateful in the court of heaven beyond the fumes of very much incense!

An abandonment of the forms to which they have pledged themselves to adhere, could not be submitted to by the clergy of the Established Church, or even by its lay members without incurring difficulties of a kind that do

not at all lie in the way of any class of Dissenters who should make similar sacrifices. And on this *special* ground the preference proposed might fairly be asked for on the one side, and might properly be submitted to on the other.

Nevertheless the ministers and members of the National Church need not, on this great and happy occasion, be altogether debarred from sharing in the honours and pleasures of Christian concession. In truth there is ground on which they might lead the way, and, as becomes them well, set the example of forbearance, and invite and facilitate the compliances they ask for. I mean that they should admit into the forms of worship *sent abroad* those few modifications or retrenchments which some of the firmest and most enlightened friends of the Church have sighed to see effected. It would not be the objections or the scruples of *Dissenters* that need be assumed as the guide in making these small alterations; but rather those recorded hints and acknowledgments that, from time to time, have been advanced by wise and pious Churchmen.

To refuse this single step towards concilia-

tion would be to lose a signal occasion for displaying the wisdom and the meekness of the apostolic spirit: it would be to bring forward anew the obsolete, and very dangerous pretension to infallibility in regard to every iota of our ecclesiastical constitutions; and it would be to make a flagrant profession of the very principle of schism, namely—That not even a particle—an indifferent particle—a worthless particle of the modes we prefer, shall ever be surrendered to the wishes or the weaknesses of our brethren, even though the surrender would prevent division, or heal it!

On such a supposed occasion it would deserve the serious consideration of the true friends of the Established Church, whether, if a disposition to coalesce among themselves, and even to give place in some degree to the Church, actually existed among the numerous bodies of orthodox Christians who stand on the side of dissent, it would not be a most unwise and perilous pertinacity to let the occasion pass by and to decline absolutely all amicable parley; or to suffer an extensive combination to be formed without the pale of the Church, which might perhaps have been so managed, as to have left her neither rival nor

adversary ; or none that could be formidable. A resoluteness of this kind has not seldom, both in public and private affairs, been the precursor of irretrievable ruin.

We assume then the supposition that, with some few and small exceptions, the forms and ritual of the English Church are fixed upon as those which, with least inconvenience, might be sent abroad by a united Missionary Society. It remains then to ask the several classes of Dissenters how much of compromise or concession would actually be required of them in giving their support to such a plan.

On looking to the “Fundamental Principle” of the London Missionary Society, it would seem to a simple reader that it recognizes, to the fullest extent, the very doctrine that I have pleaded for in these pages. It seems, I say, to make profession in its corporate capacity of the most absolute neutrality on all those lesser points which divide sincere Christians. But lest we should be accused of drawing too hastily an inference favourable to our object, let the terms of this fundamental law be deliberately examined. It is de-

clared that, “As the union of Christians of various denominations, in carrying on this great work, is a most desirable object, so, to prevent, if possible, any cause of future dissension, it is declared to be a fundamental principle of the Missionary Society, that its design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church order and government, about which there might be difference of opinion among serious persons: but the glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the heathen; and that it shall be left, as it ought to be left, to the minds of the persons whom God may call into the fellowship of His Son from among them, to assume for themselves such form of Church government as to them should appear most agreeable to the word of God.”

Now in interpreting these terms, the nature of the case, and the actual practice of the Society, alike forbid the supposition that it proposes to propagate among the heathen nothing but a naked abstraction of Christian truth; or that it holds itself bound to abstain from all acts of influence or guidance on matters of Church government, discipline, and worship. The final clause of the “Fun-

damental Principle" must not be understood in this absolute sense; for as such a pretension would be in itself absurd and insincere, it were uncharitable to impute it to the framers of the article.

In point of fact, as every one well knows, the Missionaries sent abroad by this Society are drawn chiefly, if not exclusively, from the congregations that adopt the Independent modes of government and worship; and these Missionaries—come whence they may be trained for their work under clergymen of that denomination. With their preparatory studies they, of course, imbibe the principles and learn the practices of congregational dissent; and even if, in going to their posts of labour, they are not authoritatively enjoined to promulgate and establish the same modes and principles, it may be fairly presumed that, by far the larger number of them, when called upon to organize Christian societies, in heathen lands, actually conform their proceedings, as nearly as circumstances will admit, to the home model.

It is not then true, either that the London Missionary Society sends abroad *no* form of Christianity, or that it sends indiscriminately

and at random, this form and that. The practice of the society must be deemed the best interpreter of its professed principle; and this principle we are compelled to understand as meaning simply—that forms and modes are, in the esteem of the society, things of very inferior importance; and that if it can but diffuse the blessings of the Gospel, it cares not at all, or cares little, whether the Christianity it propagates assume the garb of Presbyterianism, of Independency, or of Episcopacy.

If we would attach a precise sense to the terms of the “Fundamental Principle,” I really see not any other than the one above named, which, *with the practice of the society before our eyes*, we can assign to them. Has not the society always invited favour and aid from serious persons of all denominations, on the broad and no doubt sincere profession, that its object is much larger than sectarianism of any sort? Has it not, in order to win universal concurrence, formally and solemnly renounced the exclusive and sinister designs of party? Has it not virtually given to the world a pledge that nothing should be done under its auspices which might fairly shock the peculiar opinions of any who profess the

same great doctrine of salvation ? Or, let us advance a step neaer to our specific object:—

The London Missionary Society has always, and with marked respect, and even solicitude, invited aid from the clergy and lay members of the Established Church ; and in so doing, has tacitly acknowledged that there exists no such difference of opinion or practice between itself and them, as must imply a forfeiture of consistency on their part in bestowing upon it their good wishes, their prayers, their eloquence, and their money. In other words, the London Missionary Society, as a body, seeks and desires to accomplish nothing among the heathen which a consistent Churchman may not approve of and promote.

This is assuredly a truly catholic profession, and it were extremely uncandid to insinuate that there lurks under it any sinister purpose of sectarianism ; or that it is not founded upon *a perfect mutuality of feeling* ; or that there exists any reluctance to follow the “Fundamental Principle” wherever it may lead. We are, I say, forbidden to suppose that the society would, for a moment, hesitate to throw the whole amount of its means into

the chest of the Church of England—if once convinced that, in so doing, it would more effectually than in any other mode, promote the one and only object it has in view—the spread of the Gospel abroad.

From the corporate profession of the society we may fairly turn to the individual practice of multitudes of its members, who, by often directing the overflowings of their liberality into the coffers of societies managed exclusively by Churchmen, and by hailing with unrestricted pleasure the successes of such societies, declare in the most unequivocal manner, that they know of no scruples of conscience whatever which should prevent their aiding to promote the diffusion of the doctrine, and the discipline, and the ritual, of the Established Church. We have then reached our inference, and reached it without any casuistry or refinement of reasoning; and it is this—namely, That a plan of Missionary combination, giving preference to the forms of the Established Church, would perfectly accord with the “Fundamental Principle” of the London Missionary Society, as well as with the individual practice of its members.

The indigent shade of the founder of Methodism might be expected to come forth from his repose, were it even surmised that the Wesleyans would stand aloof from the proposed plan of union, on the plea that they could not support the usages of the Church of England. It were a calumny upon that respectable body to anticipate an objection of this kind from them. No difference of opinion, affecting conscience, holds the Wesleyans in separation from the Church; and their actual disjunction must always be defended on the general ground of expediency, or of temporary necessity. Whenever it shall appear that the great ends of Christian teaching among the lower classes, no longer demand the separate assemblage of the Wesleyans, then their separation will seem barely justifiable.

If then other bodies of Christians who might plead some specific differences of opinion were impelled, by their zeal for the diffusion of Christianity, to make concessions, it cannot be imagined that the Wesleyan Methodists, alone, would stand stiffly upon the ground of sectarianism; or that any paltry considerations of party, or of personal ambi-

tion, would be allowed to prevent their falling into a system of comprehension.

The forms of the Moravian community are essentially in harmony with the modes and principles of the English Establishment:—the one form of religion is but a spiritualized image of the other, adapted to the tastes and feelings of what must always be a very small class of persons. I can discern no obstacle standing in the way of this estimable body of Christians, if they were invited to co-operate in measures directed by Churchmen. Or if for a moment, they hesitated to obey the call of charity—an event which I do not believe would happen, they would doubtless presently yield to the earnest solicitations of their brethren of all other denominations, who, well informed of the fervour and purity of the Moravian Missionary spirit, would not spare the most pressing entreaties for obtaining their compliance.

You perceive, my dear friend, that I have reserved my grand difficulty to the last; and I hear you, in the triumphant tone of an opponent who believes he has an insurmountable

objection on his tongue, ask—"But is it possible to devise any scheme of comprehension which shall include those able promoters of the Missionary cause—the Baptists?" "How," you ask, "shall *this* body of our brethren, without compromise of principle, or direct violation of conscience, be brought within the pale of, even the most ingeniously devised system of catholic combination?" You grant that they may continue to labour in the same great work; but affirm that it must always be in a corner of the vineyard by themselves: or at least, until the enigma is solved which at present so peremptorily divides them from the mass of Christians.

Rather than that this difficulty, which I confess to be of a formidable kind, should be allowed to prevent the proposed union of Christians in the Missionary work, it would be advisable to leave this one impregnable fortress in our rear, and to advance on the course of evangelical conquest, after bestowing our best wishes upon the solitary exertions of our Baptist brethren. But may not something better be hoped for? In the cause of unanimity really desperate in this quarter? I think not. One might, for instance, urge

upon our Baptist brethren the general argument, above advanced, and appeal to them on the ground of those practical concessions which the infallible instinct of Christian feeling—a far better guide often than the logic of polemics, has again and again prompted them to make. Has never a Baptist deemed it consistent with his peculiar tenet to contribute a guinea—a speech—a prayer, in aid of the promulgation of Christianity by those who have defrauded it (as he believes) of one of its sacraments? I subpoena to appear in open court before the Christian Church, the most strenuous defender of immersion, and the most determined opponent of paedobaptism that the Baptist body can send forth, and demand of him to say whether, in framing his daily petitions for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, he is wont, either verbally or mentally, to limit his request to the small circle of Baptist exertions? I ask him, whether he religiously shuns every convocation of Christians assembled to promote the designs of paedobaptist Missionary Societies? I challenge him to affirm that he has never dropped his gold into a paedobaptist coffer. I dare him to say that he has never thanked

God for the success of paedobaptist preaching ! You and I, my dear friend, know many of the Baptists too well, and think far too highly of them, to allow us even to give a hearing to any one who, to the disgrace of his party, should step forwards, and reply to these interrogatories in the affirmative. We rather assume it as certain that all intelligent and well informed men of this denomination hold it to be both lawful and praiseworthy to promote, to the utmost of their power, the diffusion of the Gospel, even when it is disadvantaged, as they think, by a very material departure from apostolic practice. They might therefore give their aid to a Catholic Mission *by an extension* of the principle which often leads them to support paedobaptist societies.

If this argument were rejected, or found to be insufficient to win from the Baptists so much concession as would be required, if they fell in with the proposed plan of union ; our next resource must be to press upon our friends of this persuasion a very serious practical difficulty, which already meets them in their foreign operations, and which must assume a most formidable aspect, if the happy time should arrive of wide-spreading conver-

sion among the heathen. In order to see his difficulty in its full force, and in a distinct light, we will confine our attention to India, and imagine that the teachers sent out by the different Missionary Societies, and who are stationed often in the same cities or vicinities, actually succeed in collecting large congregations; and that their converts make proficiency enough in religious and general knowledge to qualify them for looking beyond the mere elements of Christian doctrine, and for forming opinions for themselves upon a variety of secondary topics. In such a state of things, it will be utterly impracticable for the Baptist teachers to conceal from their flocks the fact, that there exists, among Christians in England, and in India, an opinion and practice different from their own, relative to the subject and mode of Baptism. It will then become necessary, for them to make their choice between the only two courses that lie before them. Of these courses, the *first*, is boldly to assume the style of infallibility—a style, by the way, for which they may find models enough on the page of Church History, and even without looking so far as Rome. On this hazardous, yet often success-

ful plan, they must empirically proclaim that *they* are absolutely and entirely in possession of the mind of the Lord, and that whoever differs from them—let the reasons he may urge be never so specious, is wilfully and criminally in error. But surely there are few even though their persuasion of having truth on their side may be of the firmest kind, who would thus stake the whole of their influence and reputation upon the passive obedience of their followers. To act this reckless part would not be to sow the seeds of bigotry, but to carry to the infant churches a full-grown intolerance, laden with its ripe fruit of poison. I find it hard to believe that a Baptist teacher is any where to be found so infurate with dogmatism as not to shrink from his purpose when about to originate so much mischief among simple-minded converts!

But if *this* course cannot—must not be pursued, then the alternative which lies before our Baptist brethren is precisely that which common sense, not to say Christian humility, prescribes.—Let them be content to set before their converts the simple fact, in some such manner as this—“There has long been “carried on a dispute among sincere Chris-

"tians relative both to the mode of administering the ordinance of baptism, and to the proper subject of the rite. We account for the existence of this strange and unhappy misunderstanding, not by granting that any impenetrable obscurity rests upon the terms in which the Lord has made known his will in these particulars; but by supposing that a superstitious departure from the apostolic practice took place in a very early age, and gained universal credit, and has possessed itself so firmly of the minds of the generality of Christians, that they are unable to free themselves from the illusion, or to perceive the force of the contrary evidence, which, to us appears in a light perfectly convincing. We look forwards to the time when this error shall be dissipated, and when the Christian law of Baptism shall be understood by our brethren, as it is by us. Meanwhile, as you see, we are far from imputing to those who differ from us, any contumacious obstinacy, or guilty persistence in error, or indeed any motive inconsistent with the genuineness of the Christian character. We deplore the mistake which, as we think, they have fallen into; but we do

" not love them the less on account of it : on
" the contrary, we respect their virtues, not
" less than as if they thought with us : we
" cultivate personal friendship with them ; we
" hold with them *undisturbed Church commun-*
" *ion*; we join hands with them heartily in
" every effort to do good ; and even more
" than this ;—in order that we may put no
" hindrance in the way of the measures used
" for the spread of the Gospel, we consent to
" do and to say *rather less* and *rather more*,
" than we should, if acting simply on our own
" convictions, without regard to the opinion
" of others.

If once this tone of reasonable moderation and of Christian simplicity were taken ;—and I am reluctant to believe that any other would be assumed ; then, a diversity of opinion and practice would cease to be a great evil; and means of accommodation might readily be devised. Baptist teachers, wherever they might be called to labour, would enjoy the liberty which belongs to every Christian, to set forth, in charitable terms, and on proper occasions, the grounds of their peculiar opinions ; and they, and those converts who might be convinced by their arguments, would be

free, individually, to abstain from any practice which they think unwarranted by Scripture, and to observe any ceremonial which they think of divine authority. This extent of liberty could generate no mischief within a Church where common sense and Christian charity preside.

But the holders of the opinion of the Baptists would *not* be free—for no disciple of Christ can enjoy such liberty, to disturb the consciences of the simple by exaggerating the importance of an opinion obviously not essential to the faith of a Christian. Such persons would not be free to talk with heat on the disputed question ; they would not be free to set a step over the limits of meekness and modesty ; and assuredly they would not be free to separate themselves on the ground of any such “doubtful disputation.”

On the other hand, it must be remembered that the *majority* possesses no rightful authority to insist upon the submission of individuals, in matters confessedly of subordinate importance. The liberty of quietly protesting against what is deemed erroneous, and the duty of giving indulgence to such protestations are correlatives : but the one does not imply

a licence to break the bonds of unity, nor the other a right to quash the expression of opinion.

So much of indulgence and of concession as our Baptist brethren must require, might, with a very good grace, be granted to them by the Church of England, which not only seems to favour the practice of immersion, but also, by demanding sponsors at the font, appears, indirectly, to recognise a principle not very unlike to that which is assumed as a ground of opposition to the baptism of infants.

And now, my dear friend, I anticipate the question which you are hastening to put to me;—you have listened to my argument, and think yourself entitled to ask whether, informed as I am in some tolerable degree of the state of religious parties, and not altogether ignorant of human nature, and not by temperament very sanguine, I do myself think the adoption of the principles here recommended a probable event?—The question is a fair one, and I deliberately reply to it in the affir-

mative. After distinctly reviewing the mighty array of obstacle which, of course, will plant itself in the path of those who may be won to espouse the cause of expansive charity, I am not afraid to say that I hope to see the reform effected which I plead for. If I had not believed that my plan and argument are in fact only the expression and the interpretation of the spirit of the times, I would not have broached them; or I would have waited for the ripening of the temper that is growing.

I hear, indeed, the instant outcry of hundreds, perhaps of thousands, of respectable men who, with all the kindness one could wish in their hearts, yet have not a power of vision to look beyond the limits of their religious habitudes. It matters not for such persons that the high walls of partition may have crumbled down, or been levelled to the ground.—There they sit, unconscious of what has happened within bow-shot. The opposition of persons of this class I do not condemn;—God forbid! but neither do I reckon it to the amount of substantial difficulty.—Whether there are hundreds, or hundreds of thousands of such opposers, is of little conse-

quence. I give their repugnance a date : they will startle at the proposition, and exclaim, as a man does who is awakened by a stranger. But if they are not foolishly irritated by indiscreet friends of reform ; or wrought upon by crafty partisans, they will at length quietly fall into the new order of things and like it better than the old. Good feelings are in them already ; and they have good sense ; and they have partaken of the better influence of the times, and they need only a guiding hand in stepping across, from one path to another.

You very well know that a proposition for sound and rational reform is nothing more than the embodying of some floating sentiment of right reason which has been, for a while past, whispering itself, as it were, in every ones ears ; and speaking distinctly in the ears of the wise and thoughtful ; and which, although, when for the first time it starts out into words, it makes many lift their brows, very quickly insinuates itself, as with the graceful ease of nature, among our inmost convictions, and henceforward seems to us like a something which we have always known and approved. How much soever

the proposition advanced in these letters may at first, excite the surprise, or even dislike, of the passive portion of the religious world, I confide that it will in the end give its irresistible weight to the side of those sentiments which, unconsciously to itself, have been germinating beneath the surface. I have but interpreted—as I firmly believe, those indefinite ideas which, this long time, have been coming to the birth in the hearts of Christians.—Many may oppose themselves to necessary changes at the first, but they will consent in the end.

The friends of Missionary reform must expect the hostility of the few—a few, I trust whose hearts have not yet melted under the kindly influence of the times; or in whose bosoms the gall of the worst of the malignant passions—religious hatred, works with a vehemence so much the more intense, because it is confined. These persons, if such there are in our age, may be infuriated, but they are not to be swayed by the pleadings of charity. Take from them the objects of their splenetic preference; and remove out of their sight the objects of their splenetic aversion,

and you strip them to a state of pitiable destitution. To them the world would be a void if they could find in it none to hate ; and none to hug in hatred of others. Incomparably rather would they wander upon the mountans of eternal solitude, than be brought unto the one fold where there is one shepherd. Offer to such men the unleavened aliment of love, freed from all relish of malice—they turn upon you, and ask, “ Is there any taste in the white of an egg ? ”

And such men—alas ! here and there one such is to be found in the church—have ever in readiness a store of most specious pretexts, wherewith to cover the blackness of their hearts :—they carry their poison in “ an alabaster box,” which one might suppose to hold the “ very precious ointment ” of charity. Forsooth, they are all alive with holy sensibility, fearing lest the purity of divine institutions should be soiled by the touch of an “ unwashen ” finger, or the perfect symmetry of the church marred by the misplacing of a stone ! They can by no means consent—no, not to the moving of a pin ; for have they not a warranty of God’s word for each pin, and its bearing, in their tabernacle ? Can they not

give you a text in favour of every inch of ointment that decorates *their* church ? how then should they suffer sacrilegious hands to move what heaven has fastened ?

But now I pray you follow one of these sticklers to his home, and see if his zeal for God be much better than odious hypocrisy. Is he indeed moved with so sacred a solicitude to maintain the right worshiping of God in the world ? but what does he do to promote the honour of God in his family ? You will find that he neglects the religious education of his children and servants ; or that he shocks such sense of religion as they may have, by the sourness, or the sallies of his temper ; by his sensularities, by his levities ; or by the frauds he practises in his business. Take you any fifty of those who *distinguish themselves* as the strenuous maintainers of sectarian peculiarities, and I challenge you to pick out three from the number, who do not, by some such inconsistency at home, make it evident, that their ecclesiastical zeal is a thing as hollow—though not so harmless, as the slough of a snake.

Or if indeed it grieves these sanctimonious persons so much to think that a few thou-

sands of their countrymen persist in the error of worshiping God amiss; does it not give them a pain proportionably acute to know, that millions of their fellow-men abroad are worshippers of the devil? In all reason, and if there be any such thing as consistency, whoever is zealous above measure from the purity of religious forms, should show himself, beyond all measure, ardent for the conversion of idolators. If the errors of such or such a sect of Christians moves his commiseration, how feels he in regard to the votaries of Brahma? If he gives a tenth for the keeping up of his church at home, he should bestow "the half of his goods" for the preaching of the Gospel abroad. We will then respectfully listen to the scuples of the zealot, when he has afforded us some such substantial proof as this, that his pleas spring not from the spleen of his temper, but from an over wrought concern for the honour of God, and the good of his fellow-creatures.

Persons of this class will, of course, and by all means, oppose themselves to any measure, the tendency of which is to make sectarianism less sectarian. But their malice may be very serenely defied by men of a better

spirit. They live too late:—would they could fall back into the thirteenth century; or let them lie away to Madrid! Or, if they must stay among us, let them herd together, and pursue their ill courses as they can. A withering shall rest upon whatever they attempt; the spirit they are moved by might perhaps haue been winked at by heaven an age ago, but it shall be frowned upon now.

In looking around the amphitheatre of evangelical profession in search of individuals who may probably profess themselves favourers of missionary reform, the eye fixes upon many eminent persons; whose strong sense and piety afford assurance that they will meet whatever occasions may arise in the Church with a self-denying and Christian manliness of spirit. Perplexities may for a while hold them back; but certainly the distinguished men of whom I am thinking, and whose names will occur to you as readily as to me, are not the men to be left long, or far in the rear, when auspicious movements are in progress. They will convince themselves of truth and act upon that conviction.

The confidence I feel that the sentiments

advanced in these letters will at length meet the approval of the persons I allude to, is very strong. I have not been pleading for this or that ingenious device, or been urging the adoption of a particular machinery of means, or, with the fond dogmatism of an inventor, magnifying the advantages of some new contrivance. I have insisted solely upon great and universal principles ; and have affirmed strenuously nothing but truths of the highest moment. Let the measures I have been bold to recommend be judged of, approved, or rejected, on this high ground. Or, if a lurking motive of party-feeling can be detected by the keenest eye, on a single page, let the whole be set at nought.

Upon men of claim and vigorous minds I would earnestly urge the propriety, at the present moment, of surveying the state and peculiar position of the Christian Church ; and beg them to ask themselves whether they can believe that things will long remain as they are? If not, it becomes us to be prepared to act our part in a new train of events. This sort of forecasting of the future is by no means presumptuous ; it is becoming to a wise man ; it is encouraged by the word of

God, which, in granting to our perusal a true and unbroken record of past ages, and in opening dimly before us the mysteries of futurity, invites pious meditation to grasp the entire cycle of time;—yet not for purposes of idle amusement; but rather that we may gather the wisdom which may guide us in this season of our responsibility.

It is true that, in an age of unsophisticated simplicity, it may be enough that Christians, whatever dangers or revolutions may impend, are found humbly holding the faith, and doing the will of their Lord. Come what may, their spirit of love, and meekness, and purity, furnishes them with all the preparation they need for the day of trial. Clad and armed with the doctrine of peace and holiness, they can sustain no disadvantage from surprise.— But for ourselves, as it is certain that we live not in such an age of child-like uncorruptness, and as the faith and practice of the Gospel among us is intimately mingled with, and on all sides surrounded by those artificial sentiments, those nervous modes of thinking, and those expansive notions, which belong to a state of high intellectual culture, we must e'en think and feel in a manner proper to our times.

We could not, if we would, go back and sit at the feet of Polycarp, and Clement, and Barnabas! We must reason with more complexity, with more comprehension, with more exactness; and yet need not feel less as Christians should. The Giver of manly understanding and intellectual culture, can sanctify to his own glory these endowments..

At the present moment, those who, in fear of losing their Christian simplicity, refuse to think vigorously, or to fix the eye upon remote objects, and who, with the timorousness, almost, of a selfish heart, will give attention to nothing that does not immediately concern them, will find that they have somewhat mistaken the *specific* duty to which the Lord in this day is calling his people ; and instead of retaining in their hands the sweets of primitive ingenuousness, will hold nothing but the ineptitude of indolence and folly. It is a vain attempt to live otherwise than according to the characteristic conditions of the age in which our lot is cast.

But if we do thus look extensively around us, and forecast the probable course of events —not to say gather the indications of prophecy, it is hard to think otherwise that that chan-

ges are hastening towards us, such as discreet men will rather muse upon than talk of before they come. The season of indecision, of neutrality, of half-measures, of snug repose, is drawing to its end, and the question which every man will have to determine—and to determine perhaps in a day, will be, whether he will take his lot of irretrievable ruin with those who are infatuated with secular motives; or go over, in the hour of danger, to the standard of the Gospel.

The best, the true preparation for the expected hour of decision is, to keep the eye fixed upon whatever is great and unchangeable in our faith. The most fatal of all delusions is to be right in matters unimportant, and faintly to apprehend the substance of religion. The Christian Church has of late been schooled in this great lesson in a manner so remarkable as to make manifest the hand of the Divine Teacher.—The Missionary zeal has been sent down upon us, not merely (or perhaps chiefly) as the means of converting the nations; but as a spirit of burning and of judgment, of scrutiny and discrimination. It ferments in the lump to separate the precious from the vile; to make manifest who are on

the Lord's side, and who, by the confession implied in their conduct, are to be numbered with His foes. Then again it penetrates more deeply into the mass of profession, and tries us, and discriminates, in the capital article of Christian love. In measure we have come forth as gold from the trial:—the calumny of Satan who, in the open court of heaven, has these many ages been saying that the disciples of Christ love not each other, is now found, like all his spiteful but specious allegations, to be false; and it is seen that, though still infirm in judgment, and faulty in practice, the company of the godly are one in heart, and purpose. Thus have we passed through the initial process of the trial.

But the work of the Heavenly Refiner is not yet perfected. Think we that he is content with what has been accomplished, or will stay his hand, just at the moment when the fine gold is bursting forth from the dross? Assuredly not; He will rather urge the heat, in confident hope of the issue.

It is sublimely affecting to look round and see in what manner we are shut up—shut up beyond possibility of escape, under the hand of Him who is dealing with us. Omnipotent,

both for judgment and mercy, and stern in the determination of awful beneficence, and wise to catch us in our own craftiness, he has been leading his Church into the snare of its own zeal, for its good. Let us contemplate the straitness of the ground on which we are placed.—We have been quickened to a sense of our duty to preach the Gospel among the nations ; we feel that this obligation cannot be evaded, cannot be forgotten, cannot be deferred. And now, for a forty years almost, we have been toiling in the work, and are coming to a conviction that a new, a greater, and a better directed effort must be made in behalf of our benighted brethren than has yet been thought of. We do not faint, or admit misgivings ; but yet, in the depth of our hearts we conceal the wistful prayer of conscious imbecility, and are fain to ask that the Lord, in compassion to the world, would once again, as in ancient times, grant to the use of His servants the rod of his omnipotence !

Whether or not this unwhispered desire shall be listened to, who shall say ? But first the Church must be brought deliberately to revise its proceedings ; must candidly confess that it has erred, and must address itself to the

great work in a better manner. The conviction which is already engendered, must come forth, and be explicitly recognized; that Christianity can be successfully promulgated only by the united exertions of all true Christians. This is the issue to which we are approaching. The work before us is found to be too vast for our means—especially if wastefully administered: and the company of faithful men must needs join hands, or be defeated in their purpose.

The Missionary zeal is thus bringing on a reform at home, which the injunctions of Scripture have hitherto failed to effect. We must abandon our hope of winning immortal honour and eternal reward, as the successful promulgators of the Gospel; or else submit to the divine rule of church communion. Eagerly, and without forethought of the consequence, we set about converting the nations, and now find that ourselves must first be converted to the practice of the apostolic age.

If there is any one body of persons upon whom, at this moment, there rests, by eminence, a fearful weight of responsibility towards their Christian brethren—towards their coun-

trymen at large, and towards the world, it is the evangelical members of the Established Church. Let them review their position, and see in what manner the most momentous interests centre upon the conduct they shall pursue in the day when a new course must be taken.—

It is no preposterous exaggeration to affirm, that the hope of the nations is now in the keeping of the English, whose eminence, in whatever is most noble and useful, whose extensive political power, whose expansive commerce and colonization, whose spreading language and brilliant literature, whose high and commanding spirit, conspire to fix upon them the gaze of mankind. This is no empty vaunt of national vanity; for even if there were any other people that might dispute with us the palm of superiority in the particulars enumerated, yet, certainly, there is none that can compete with the English on the ground of expansive beneficence: if others are as valiant and as wise, none are so charitable. Among us—without a rival—is found the spirit of bold, laborious, and liberal philanthropy. No people sends forth, as we do almost daily from our ports, heroes of mercy, who willingly take

their last look of the fairest and the happiest of lands ; self-banished by the compassion which burns in their breasts towards the wretched of distant climes ! It is then no absurd boast to affirm, that the hope of the world is now in the keeping of the English.

But we must prosecute yet further our search for the casket that actually holds the jewel of universal mercy. Alas ! does the hope of good for the nations rest with those—the thousands among us, who are living for wealth, or living for enjoyment ; with those who thought yesterday only of pleasing themselves ; who to-day are labouring only to please themselves ; and who are saying of to-morrow, that it shall be more abundant in pleasure than to-day ? No ; from these the wretched have nothing to hope, save the casual alms that are the price of riddance from importunity.

It is none other than the religionists of England who are the sealed ministers of heaven's wide beneficence to all people. It is the men ; call them by what name you please ; enthusiasts, fools, hypocrites ;—call them thus, for these words of contumely will, if so abused, soon gain a meaning of honour ;---it is the men who cannot rest on the couch of delight,

or even be at ease in the home of domestic peace, while they know that others, whom perhaps they might help, are miserable. It is the men who, in the midst of those personal cares and sorrows which make the selfish more selfish, devise liberal things, and actually pay the cost of bringing their liberal devices into effect. Tell me not that they exhibit sometimes in their plans or temper the infirmity of human nature ;—I challenge not for them the praise of angelic wisdom :—still it is true that they are the persons of all mankind ; and they, compared with the men of past ages, who have imagined, and who have preservingly laboured to bring about the reformation of the world. And they—few of them opulent, are defraying, from year to year, the charge of carrying on the enterprise. Calumniators ! look at the tables of charitable expenditure—an expenditure to which you contribute not even the price of the least expensive of your frivolities.—Look ! and turn again to your sties of selfish indulgence, and if you cannot be ashamed, at least have the grace to be silent !

It is, I say, the religionists of England, of every communion ; I mean the holders of the doctrine of the Reformation, whose glory it is

to stand forth as the saviours of the world. Shall we descend to a more exact analysis of the general mass ? Not surely for any purpose of invidious comparison ; but that we may gain a better purchase upon the centre of movement and power. The sound members of the Established Church, the men—clergy and laity, who profess the doctrine of the martyrs, the saints, the sages of the English reformation, stand certainly distinguished among the professors of the same faith, if not by number, yet by several signal pre-eminentes. To them (generally) belongs the visible advantage of secular precedence. With them are rank and fortune ; gifts which acceptably may be laid at the feet of the King of kings. Theirs are the benefits, inestimable, of thorough education ; an advantage which the Lord has in every age vouchsafed to make use of when he has had eminent public services in hand. By them, almost exclusively, is enjoyed the honour of enduring something more like a real persecution from the world, than has been suffered in England a long while by any class of Christians. And may it not be added, that the pious members of the Established Church enjoy at the present moment, by *eminence*, that

influence of the Holy Spirit from which spring seriousness of temper, simplicity of faith, and purity of morals ; and which moreover is ordinarily conferred upon those who are in training for peculiar sufferings or services.

These distinctions give to the body of enlightened Churchmen a visible claim to the honour of taking the lead in any new and important measures in which the interests of Christianity at large may be involved. An alternative not to be evaded is before these persons ; they must either take up the part which heaven assigns them, or lose rank in front of the church universal.

If a proposition, such as might become the wisdom and meekness of Christians, and the good sense and manliness of Englishmen, were made by Churchmen to those of the Dissenters who are taking part in the Missionary cause, I verily believe it would be hailed by thousands of them with a burst of pleasure. The minority ; I think it would be *a minority*, who should persist in their rigidities, would presently crumble away into absolute non-importance. Should an overture, thus fraught with charity, be made on the one part, and acceded to on the other, extensive consequen-

ces of the happiest kind might be looked for : A bright prospect opens to my view ! but I abstain from themes which belong not to my proposed task.

The ministers of Christ are accustomed in moments of danger or difficulty, when comfort and aid from above are peculiarly needed, to refer confidently to the last promise left by the Lord with his disciples, that “*He would be with them always, even unto the end of the world.*” But is it as often recollected that the same Lord is present, not only for help in time of trouble, but for judgment and discrimination ? He walks among his churches as an exact observer of the conduct, not of the individuals merely who profess obedience to his will, but of the Church, *as a public body.* He has a system of dispensations for individuals, and a system also for his Church. He comes to its aid in times of depression, and visits it with chastisement on occasions of misconduct. He tries it with an hour of purifying tribulation, and grants to it again an auspicious season in which, peculiarly, the praise of immortal glory may be contended for and won on some course of arduous labour. But

if the occasion is slighted, the crown is withdrawn from the course in punitive displeasure; and the fair offer is made to the Christians of another nation, or of another age.

I desire nothing, my dear friend, but that those whose hearts are open to considerations of this kind should, with the seriousness which becomes the subject, hear the voice that speaks in all that is happening around us, and read, in the language of passing events, the special message sent from the head of the Church to the Christians of England. In the boldness of devout conviction, I will predict, that if we yield not at this moment to the command of Christ, the glorious work of evangelizing the world will be taken from our hands, and given to others. Mercy of Heaven! come down and help us; and as Thou hast conferred upon thy people the fire of zeal, grant unto them also the spirit of wisdom and of love.

THE END.

Tom. 12. Product
of Swan's letters on
the subject.

